

The Home Circle.

THE BEAUTIFUL SNOW.

The following lines, though perhaps familiar to some of our readers are worthy of reproduction, for their beauty is such, they will never pass into nothingness.

O the snow, the beautiful snow,
Filling the sky and the earth below,
Over the housetops, over the streets,
Over the heads of the people you meet,
Dancing,

Flitting,
Skimming along,
Beautiful snow! it does no wrong,
Flying to kiss a fair lady's cheek
Gleaming to lips in a frolicsome freak,
Beautiful snow from Heaven above
Pure as an angel—gentle as love,

O the snow, the beautiful snow,
How the flakes gather and laugh as they go,
Whirling about in the maddening fun,
It plays in its glee with every one.

Blowing,
Laughing,
Hurrying by
It lights on the face, and it sparkles the eye,
And the dogs with a bark and a bound
Snap at the crystals that eddy around
The town is alive, and its heart is a glow
To welcome the coming of the beautiful snow.

How wild the crowd goes swaying along,
Hailing each other with humor and song,
How the gay sledges like meteors flash by
Bright for the moment, then lost to the eye,
Ringing,

Swinging,
Dancing they go,
Over the crust of the beautiful snow,
Snow is pure when it falls from the sky,
To be trampled in mud by the crowds rushing by
To be trampled and tracked by the thousands
Of feet,
Till it blends in the filth of the horrible street.

Once I was pure as the snow but I fell,
Fell like the snow flakes from Heaven to hell
Fell to be trampled as filth in the street,
Fell to be scoffed, to be spit on, and beat,
Pleading,

Burning,
Dreading to die,
Selling my soul to whoever would buy,
Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread,
Mating the living and fearing the dead,
Merciful God! have I fallen so low?
And yet I was once like the beautiful snow.

Once I was as fair as the beautiful snow,
With an eye like its crystal, a heart like its glow,
Once I was loved for my innocent grace,
Flattered and sought for the charms of my face,
Father,
Mother,

Sister, all,
God and myself I have lost by my fall,
The veriest wretch that goes shivering by
Will make a wide sweep, lest they wander too
nigh
For all that is on or above me I know,
There is nothing that's pure as the beautiful
snow.

How strange it should be, that this beautiful
snow
Should fall on the sinner with nowhere to go,
How strange it should be, that when night
comes again
If the snow and the ice struck my desperate
brain,
Fainting,

Freezing,
Dying, alone,
Too wicked for prayer, too weak for a moan,
To be heard on the streets of the crazy town
Gone mad with joy of the snow coming down,
To lie and to die in my terrible woe
With a bed and a shroud of the beautiful
snow.

A TOUCHING STORY.

A drunkard who had run through his property returned one night to his unfurnished home. He entered his empty hall. Anguish was gnawing at his heart strings, and language inadequate to express his agony as he entered his wife's apartment, and there beheld the victims of his appetite, his loving wife and darling child. Morose and sullen, he seated himself without a word; he could not speak; he could not look upon them. The mother said to the little one at her side:

"Come, my dear, it is time to go to bed," and that little baby, as she was wont, knelt by her mother's lap and gazing wistfully into the face of her suffering parent like a peice of chiseled statuary slowly repeated her nightly orison.

When she had finished, the child (but four years old) said to her mother:

"Dear mother may I offer up one more prayer?"

"Yes, yes, my sweet pet, pray,"

And she lifted up her tiny hands, closing her eyes, and prayed:

"Oh, God, spare, oh, spare, my dear papa!"

heart of stone became a heart of flesh. Wife and child were both clasped to his bosom and in penitence he said:

"My child, you have saved your father from a drunkard's grave. I'll sign the pledge."

"IN LOVE EXPRESSED."

When it becomes necessary to reprove children, use the gentlest form of address possible under the circumstances. Reproof must not fall like a violent storm, bearing down and making those to droop whom it is meant to cherish and refresh. It must descend as the dew upon the tender herb, or like molting flakes of snow; the softer it falls, the longer it dwells upon and the deeper it sinks into the mind. Never reprove the little ones before strangers, for children are just as sensitive as we are, and wish strangers to think well of them; when they have been told before any one with whom they are not well acquainted that they are naughty, or idle or careless, their vanity is terribly wounded. They have their self-respect, and such mortifications of it are very dangerous. Fancy how you would feel if all the important personages on earth had been told before your face that you were a very bad and contemptible sort of person! Would not a certain recklessness take possession of you? Would you not say to yourself, what can it matter what I do now? It is much more likely that a child will be thus affected. Praise spurs it on to increased effort. Blame takes away its power of doing well when it is administered before visitors. In matters of deportment children should not only be thoroughly instructed, but instructed privately. Say, before Mrs. Smith comes to tea, that Mrs. Smith must be helped to the preserves first. Or afterwards tell the child that it was a breach of good manners to scream, "Give me some strawberries," immediately on sitting down to table; but don't treat Mrs. Smith to a scene, for the child's sake as well as her own. If you have not taught the little thing to do what is proper and elegant when you are alone, you cannot expect it to be endowed with a sudden fine sense of what is right because strangers are present.

MARGERY.

Her name was Margery. She was a little old broken down woman who obtained a precarious living by washing clothes for other people; her body was bent and her hands deformed and misshapen by hard labor and ill-usage; her face was dried and shrivelled up like a piece of old parchment, and of the same repulsive yellow hue. Her countenance was the saddest one I ever knew, and yet that face was handsome once and that form that would have rivalled the result of an artist's fancy, or a poet's dream. Time, grief, recklessness and despair had wrought their work, and were now done with her. She died alone. They found her in her damp and unwholesome cot. How long she had lain there nobody knew and nobody cared. She was nobody but old Margery the washerwoman whose history nobody was curious to ascertain.

The coroner came with a coarse and ill favored company, who indulged in a few rude jest and a season of careless laughter, and then all went their way nor thought more of matter except to present their claim for fees. She was buried at the city's expense in the pauper's field. No one breathed a sigh nor shed a tear at her funeral and that was the last earthly experience of Margery.

O sin what temples hast thou overthrown, what wrecks hast thou scattered and strewn along the shore of life. I wonder if the angels have as little regard for the unfortunate and lowly as most mortals possess. The spring blossom bloom, the summer sunshine gleams and the autumn leaves are scattered over many nameless and forgotten graves, yet with a beauty impartial to all. So will it be in heaven's justice to the soul of poor lost Margery.

WHAT A LIGHTNING STROKE REVEALED.

An Ohio paper tells a very strange and startling story of the revelation made by a stroke of lightning a few days since. The stroke, it seems, prostrated a splendid grove of oaks in the Miami Valley. Among them was one which was rent asunder from tip to bottom, and according to the narrator, the fragments, in falling apart, disgorged a gauzy skeleton, yellow with age, which instantly fell to pieces and was scattered over several feet of the surrounding pasturage. With the remains was also found a few bottles of ancient pattern and a leather pocket-book, in good state of preservation. The pocket-book told the sad and tragic story of the disinterred skeleton. It contained papers which were brown and discolored, and covered with rude pencillings, scarcely legible, but enough could be deciphered to show that they had been written by a soldier in the revolutionary army—a man in fact who had been an aid and companion to Gen. Washington. His name was Roger Vandenburg, and he held the rank of a captain.

After participating in the privations of Valley Forge, and in the retreat across the Jerseys, and serving a brief time at West Point, marched with St. Clair against the Northwest Indian Indians. On Nov. 3, 1791, he was wounded and captured by the Redskins. He subsequently escaped, however, and being hard

pressed by his savage foes, he took refuge in this oak tree. The hollow afforded a convenient retreat, and he allowed himself to drop into it. Then, too late, he found that he had miscalculated the depth of the hollow, and there was no escape. The remaining hours of his life he spent in writing a diary, the entries of which show a terrible record of human suffering, and during a period of eleven days he painfully described his sensations as he felt himself slowly starving to death. The story is certainly a strange one, and there is nothing improbable about it.

"TO-MORROW AND TO-MORROW."

Life is monotonous. Whether we regard the life of man, or the life of boats, we are struck by the same remarkable fact, that life, to all outward appearance, is a monotonous succession of scenes and movements—all but incidental. We wonder how the interest is kept up. But we never tire of going to bed at night, and we are very sorry when we tire of getting up in the morning. We never weary except with regret, of breakfasting, dining and supping; and yet these actions are repeated incessantly three hundred and sixty five times in the year, with renewed excitement on every succeeding occasion. We take off our clothes once every day. We do this, at nearly the same hour, in daily succession; and when health is good, the pleasure derived from so doing is not marred by the repetition of the act; for the ebbing and the flowing of our bodily sensations prepare us, without any effort on our part, for all the vicissitudes of our existence. When hungry, food is agreeable; when weary, sleep or rest is a treat; when cold, the pleasure derived from a cheerful fire-side is delicious. The excitements are kept up by contrasts; and we purchase the enjoyment of one feeling by encouraging the reverse. With health, youth and prosperity, we should never be weary. It is age, and weakness, and poverty, that prepare us for death; and even that comes easy upon most men, at last, like a sleep, and the heaviness of the heart gives even the last sleep a welcome.

THE MARCH OF PROVIDENCE.

If we turn our eyes to history, we shall find that all the great developments of the human mind have turned to the advantage of society—all the great struggles of humanity to the good of mankind. It is not, indeed, immediately that these efforts take place, ages often elapse, a thousand obstacles intervene, before they are fully developed; but when we survey a long course of ages, we see that all has been accomplished. The march of Providence is not subjected to narrow limits; it cares not to develop to-day the consequences of a principle which it has established yesterday; it will bring them forth in ages, when the appointed hour has arrived; and it is not the less sure that it is slow. The throne of the Almighty rests on time—it marches through its boundless expanse as the gods of Homer through a space—it makes a step and ages have passed away. How many centuries elapsed, how many changes ensued, before the regeneration of the inner man, by the means of Christianity, exercised on the social state its great and salutary influence. Nevertheless it has at length succeeded. No one can mistake its effects at this time.—Guizot.

A KISS.

Since the days of Judas himself, the kiss has been a powerful agent in the annals of the human race. There have been kisses like those of Antony and Cleopatra, of Henry the VIII., and Anne Boleyn, which have shaken an empire or destroyed a religion. If we knew the secret history of courts, we should probably learn that nations have been erected or erased by the magic touches of a woman's lips. A great problem therefore lies before us. Has this discovery proved an affliction or a blessing to mankind? Probably the latter; for it has certainly increased the influence of women, and the influence of a woman is employed more for good than for ill. Beloved, tender-hearted women, companions and consolers of our life! With a kiss you welcome the infant to this world of sin and sorrow; with a kiss you bestow on the soft-cheeked youths the raptures of first loves; with a kiss you alleviate the agony of death. And what, alas! are the kisses which men too often give you in return? Judas-kisses, treacherous and fatal, which poison innocent hearts, and turn to curses on painted and dispairing lips. Happy are they who can remember without remorse the kisses of their youth.

THE CUNNING THRUSH.

There is much more intellect in birds than people suppose. An instance of this occurred the other day at a slate quarry belonging to a friend, from whom we have the narrative. A thrush, not aware of the expansive properties of gunpowder, thought proper to build her nest on a ridge of the quarry, in the very centre of which they were constantly blasting the rock. At first she was very much discomposed by the fragments flying in all directions, but still she would not quit her chosen locality. She soon observed that a boll rang whenever a train was about to be fired, and that, at the notice, the workmen retired to safe positions. In a few days when she heard the bell, she quitted her exposed situation, and flew down to where the workmen sheltered themselves—dropping close to their feet.

There she would remain until the explosion had taken place, and then return to her nest. The workman observed this; narrated it to their employers, and it was also told to visitors who came to view the quarry. The visitors naturally expressed a wish to witness so curious a specimen of intellect; but as this rock could not be always blasted when visitors came, the bell was rung instead, and for a few times answered the same purpose. The thrush flew down close to where they stood, but she perceived that she was trifled with, and it interfered with the process of incubation; the consequence was, that afterward, when the bell rung, she would peep over the ledge to ascertain if the workmen did retreat, and if they did not, she would remain where she was.

THE GOOD MRS. GRUNDY.

If we suppress prejudice in the matter, we shall see that Mrs. Grundy, with all her busy interference, is commonly in the right. When has she upheld a vice of any kind? You may say that she has upheld some of the greatest of evils, such as duelling, slavery, etc. Well, Mrs. Grundy is conservative, it must be conceded, and is not commonly found in the front ranks of the reformers; but if a proposed reform is really a sound one, she is sure, very soon, to take up its defence. It is very wise to be conservative and slow, in order, eventually, to be right; and, when Mrs. Grundy has upheld that which you have set down as an evil, it has been in profound conviction that it was no evil at all. It has been a mistake of judgment, not of morals. Mrs. Grundy, slandered as she is, is almost uniformly on the side of right doing. She condemns private and public malfeasance; she deprecates drunkenness, gambling, incontinence, extravagance, profanity, vice of all kinds. She is sometimes a little too fond of purely successful men, and yet is not adverse to a rigid inquiry into the conditions of the success; she is perhaps too little regardful of unfortunate men, yet after all will, in a majority of instances, understand accurately the cause of their misfortunes. If not always charitable in her judgments, she is a earnest admirer of charity. If altogether too prone to give importance to dress, and similar little things, and too easily shocked at an offence against mere conventionality, she yet always approves what may be called minor, but which are yet highly important, virtues, such as neatness, cleanliness, order, propriety of demeanor. If she suppresses individuality, she also keeps down vulgar assurance, low taste, and bad style. She is earnest in her denunciation of husbands who ill-treat their wives, of wives who neglect their homes; and these are people who are always bitter upon the good old lady. One of her highest claims to consideration is that she often forces people of this stamp into better behavior—to at least assume a virtue if they have it not. The fear of scandal has kept many men circumspect and apparently virtuous; and Mrs. Grundy, in compelling vice to work in secret, has contributed not a little to its eventual genuine subordination.—Appleton's Journal.

THE AUTUMN OF LIFE.

It is the solemn thought connected with middle life—that life's last business is begun in earnest, and it is then midway between the cradle and the grave—that a man begins to marvel that he let the days of youth go by so half enjoyed. It is the pensive autumn feeling it is the sensation of half-sadness which we experience when the longest day of the year is passed, and every day that follows is shorter, and the light fainter, and the feebleness shadows tell that Nature is hastening with gigantic footsteps to her winter grave. So does man look back upon his youth. When the first gray hairs become visible, when the fun-welcome truth fastens itself upon the mind that a man is no longer going up hill but down, and that the sun is always westering, he looks back on things behind. When we were children we thought as children. But now there lies before us manhood, with its earnest work, and then old age, and then the grave, and then home. There is a second youth for man, better and holier than his first, if he will look on, and not look back.

DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN.

I stand in a darkened room before a little casket that holds the silent form of my first-born. My arm is around the wife and mother who weeps over the lost treasure and cannot till the tears have their way, be comforted. I had not thought that my child would die—that my child could die. I knew that other children had died but I felt safe. We laid the little fellow close to his grandfather; we strewed his grave with flowers, and returned to our saddened home with hearts united in sorrow as they had never united in joy, and with sympathies forever opened towards all who are called to a kindred grief. I wonder where he is to-day, in what mature angelhood he stands, how he will look when I meet him, how he will make himself known to me, who has been his teacher! He was like me; will will his grandfather know him? I never can cease thinking of him as cared for and led by the same hand to which my own youthful fingers clung, and as hearing from the fond lips of my own father the story of his father's eventful life. I feel how wonderful has been the ministry of my children, how much

more I have learned from them than they have ever learned from me—how by holding my own strong life in sweet subordination to their helplessness, they have taught me patience, self sacrifice, self-control, truthfulness, faith, simplicity and purity.

Ah! this t'king to one's arms a little group of souls, fresh from the hand of God, and living with them in loving companionship through all their stainless years, is, or ought to be, like living in heaven, for of such is the heavenly kingdom. To no one of those am I more indebted than to the boy who went away from me before the world had touched him with a stain. The key that shut him in the tomb was the only key that could unlock my heart, and let in among its sympathies the world of sorrowing men and women who mourn because their little ones are not.

The little graves, alas, how many they are! The mourners above them, how vast the multitude! Brothers, sisters, I am one with you. I press your hands, I weep with you. I trust with you. I belong to you. Those waxen, folded hands, that still breast, so often pressed warm to our own, those sleep-bound eyes which have been so full of love and life, that sweet unmoving, alabaster face—ah! we have all looked upon them, and they have made us one, and made us better. There is no fountain which the angel of healing troubles with his restless and life-giving wings so constantly as the fountain of tears, and only those too lame and bruised to bathe miss the blessed influence.—Dr. J. G. Holland.

THE EFFECTS OF WORRY.

The effects of worry are more to be dreaded than those of simple hard work is evident from noting the classes of persons who suffer most from the effects of mental overstrain. The casebook of the physician shows that it is the speculator, the betting man, the railway manager, the great merchant, the superintendent of large manufacturing or commercial works, who most frequently exhibits the symptoms of cerebral exhaustion. Mental cares accompanied with suppressed emotion, occupations liable to great vicissitudes of fortune, and those which involve the bearing on the mind of a multiplicity of intricate details, eventually break down the lives of the strongest. In estimating what may be called the staying powers of different minds under hard work, it is always necessary to take early training into account. A young man, cast suddenly into a position involving great care and responsibility, will break down in circumstances in which, had he been gradually habituated to the position, he would have performed his duties without difficulty. It is probably for this reason that the professional classes generally suffer less from the effects of overstrain than others. They have a long course of preliminary training, and their work comes on them by degrees; therefore when it does come in excessive quantity, it finds them prepared for it. Those, on the other hand, who suddenly vault into a position requiring severe mental toil, generally die before their time.—Chambers' Journal.

TRUE WORTH.

A really modest and meritorious person will never make pretensions of any kind. His manner and expressions will always have a tendency to underrate his real ability, not because he will pretend to be less capable than he really is, but as so many men have become pretentious in their manners and expressions, he fears he may be considered as such. We are, in consequence, too apt to consider the extent of the capacity of those whom we meet a little below the standard indicated by their acts and expressions. Therefore, true merit is seldom properly appreciated, and its cultivation is never greatly encouraged. On the contrary, pretence is almost always successful. He who is pretentious affects the interests of society in a similar manner as the swindler. He induces men to doubt the capacity of others, and often refuse aid and employment, because they measure the merits of all by those of the pretentious fop and the conceited ignoramus. Many an honest and skilful man, and many a valuable improvement has been refused support and adoption because the pretentious swindler has previously misled the people and imposed upon them outrageously. Pretensions of every kind are the true indications of a weak mind or a would-be swindler.

A story is told about a Yankee who lately settled out in the West. He went to a neighbor and accosted him thus: "Wa'al, I reckon you ain't got an old hen nor nothin you would lend me a couple of weeks, have you neighbor?" "I will lend you one with pleasure," replied the gentleman, picking out the very finest one in his coop. The Yankee took the hen home, and then went to another neighbor and borrowed a dozen of eggs. He then set the hen, and in due time she hatched a dozen chickens. The Yankee was puzzled; he could return the hen, but how was he to return the eggs? Another bright idea. He would keep the hen till she had laid a dozen eggs. This he did, and then returned the hen and eggs to their respective owners, remarking as he did so: "Wa'al, I reckon I have got about as fine a dozen chickens as you ever laid eyes on, and they didn't cost me a cent nuther."

An amateur farmer wonders "why on all this fair earth the ground is spread bottom-side up, so that it must be turned over with a plow before crops can be raised."