

on the alert for such victims. It was this cruel man who suggested to Perrault his world-renowned story of Bluebeard that Dan there knows all about. Well, when Ninon and her little brother were passing a thicket about half-way home, two masked men sprang out upon them, and stifling their terror-stricken cries, carried them to a distance from the highway. They then bound bandages firmly over their mouths, and the villains lifted them on their horses and galloped away and away, till poor Ninon felt that she could never find her way home again, even if she had a chance. Soon the shadowy wall of a great castle rose before them, with a single light in a lofty tower. The feet of the iron-shod horses rang on the draw-bridge, which rose after them, and then Ninon knew they were prisoners. At first they were shut up in a dungeon, that was perfectly dark, for their cruel jailor knew the overpowering effect of rayless darkness. But strange little Pierre said that the place was lighter than the sun, and that lovely faces were smiling at him. Ninon, however, saw nothing, and it was dark indeed to her, and she sobbed bitterly, and called on her mother and lover for help. But only stony-hearted Laval and his accomplices heard her girlish voice. A bell in one of the towers slowly tolled out eleven o'clock. A little later the door of their cell opened, and light streamed in. Two men in hideous masks seized them, and carried them up and up, till Ninon, in horror, thought that they were to be thrown from the top of the tower. But worse than that awaited them. For soon they entered a large circular room, in which, on a sort of throne, sat a dreadful looking man, clad in sable. He had human form and features, but reminded one of the more disgusting kind of wild beasts. His eyes were small, piercing and malignant, but his face was large, sensual, devilish, and poor Ninon lost hope from the moment she saw him. She instinctively felt that to sue for mercy from such a monster, would be worse than vain. She had lost hope utterly. She and her mother were mistaken. The saints cared for neither little Pierre nor herself, and had left them to fall into the clutches of the demon. She glanced slowly around the room in the faint hope of escape from that horrible man. But the walls were thick. No light came from within, but only from a great furnace that was strangely constructed and made her shudder. For a long time there was perfect silence in the dreadful place. The two masked men, grotesque and horrible, stood near the furnace motionless as statues. The sable monster on his black throne watched them without moving a muscle in his great, coarse face, only his small eyes seemed like two scintillating sparks of internal fire, as with a fiendish kind of pleasure he marked the agony of Ninon. The young girl instinctively gave up all hope of life, and yet never had life seemed so sweet. Its homeliest details now appeared precious, and their poor, little cottage heaven, compared with this den of infamy. She had just tasted the exquisite happiness of a new and before unknown love, and now she was to die. She thought of her mother growing gray in loneliness and grief. She thought of her lover coming eagerly to their trysting place, but when he came on the morrow, Christmas day, what would she be—where would she be? and in her anguish, she cried aloud, and kneeling, stretched out her hands toward the sable throne.

"Then for the first time the coarse, thick lips of the monster distorted themselves into a hideous grin, but otherwise he did not move, and the awful silence continued in that chamber of death.

"Ninon put her hands to her face, to hide his ugly visage, and then sank down in the apathy of despair.

"There was nothing in Ninon's agony that disturbed Laval. Scarcely a night passed but some victim like herself writhed under his remorseless eyes. Their mortal fear and sufferings were his recreation before the sterner business of sorcery that followed, and the more demonstrative they were in their pain, the more high-spiced his pleasure. At first Ninon's beautiful and expressive face kept his whole attention, but after a time he began to note the strangely-appearing little boy who accompanied her. There was no fear in his calm, pale face. There was no dread in his large spiritual eyes, that seemed to look past the monster and his thick walls to some rare vision beyond.

"What does the little wretch see?" he queried, for Laval, like his age, was very superstitious.

"But Ninon must be goaded out of her apathy, or the night would be dull; so at last the thick lips open, and the awful silence is broken by more awful words:

"Girl, thou who art to lose body and soul, look at me."

"Slowly Ninon lifted her eyes to his brutal face, and gazed fixedly as some poor little bird might into the unenvomed jaws of a serpent. The fascination of fear was upon her. In a thick, guttural, monotonous voice, the human beast continued, "The devil has shown me that there is a potent charmin' in thy young innocent heart, there are powerful spells in thy warm young blood; and that with them I may discover untold wealth. When the bell tolls out the hour of midnight, I shall take your bleeding heart out of your living body, and the heart of your brother out of his body, that with them I may decoct an essence in yonder furnace, that will transmute the basest metal into gold. Midnight is the hour, and at midnight you shall die. Only the spell will be far more potent if you first give yourself to the foul fiend. Therefore, repeat after me:

"I give my soul and body to Satan."

"Mechanically the terror-stricken girl began.

"I give—but little Pierre put his hand over her mouth.

"The saints forbid," he said quietly.

"Seize the child, tear out his staring eyes," shouted the monster savagely.

Mr. Dimmerly stopped, took off his spectacles, and coolly wiped them as he said:

"I'm through, and my part of the story is true. This Gilles de Laval, or as he is better known in French history, the Marshal de Retz, destroyed hundreds of children, at ages varying from eight to eighteen, and in ways far worse than I have described. So Lottie, have you had enough of high tragedy?"

"O uncle," she exclaimed, with a little impatient stamp of the foot. "You have told us a horrible story. It must not break off in this way, or we won't sleep a wink to-night."

Mr. Hemstead, you take up the story were uncle left off, and if possible, complete it in a way that won't make our blood run cold."

Thus Hemstead was put upon his mettle, and soon all present were hanging with breathless interest on his rich, well-modulated tones.

"When the monster from his sable throne, uttered his merciless mandate to tear out the eyes of little Pierre, the two grotesque and statue-like apparitions sprang into life, and snatching hot irons from the furnace, rushed toward the child. Ninon gave a shriek of terror, and sought to shelter the boy in her arms, crying, 'Do what you will with me, but spare him.' Thus again, more truly than before by jealous tears, Ninon proved that she had become a woman."

At this sentence he was interrupted by a perfect storm of applause, in which Harcourt led off again and again. But Hemstead drew his inspiration from Lottie's face, and noted with a thrill of joy that tears stood in her eyes. This was a richer tribute than he received from all the others, and with deeper and more effective tones he continued:

"But just then the great bell began to toll out the hour of twelve, and the demon, from his sable throne, made a restraining gesture.

"Naught," he said, "must now interfere with our high magic and solemn sorcery. At the last stroke of the bell take their hearts out of their living bodies."

"Ninon sank on the floor, murmuring like a dying zephyr among the chords of an Aeolian harp, 'Farewell, mother dear. Farewell, my lover true. I cannot meet you to-morrow at the fallen tree,' (and here Hemstead glanced at Lottie, whose face was instantly suffused) "and she bowed her head upon her brother's shoulder, and sobbed aloud.

"Slowly and solemnly upon the silent night the iron tongue told out the fateful moments.

"With increasing uneasiness the monster upon his sable throne watched little Pierre, who, from first to last, had not shown a trace of fear or trouble. Among all his victims he had never seen a child like this, and his guilty heart began to fail him woefully.

"He surely sees something," he muttered, as the boy's large eyes dilated with a wondrous awe, and his face grew luminous with a great joy.

"The heavy vibrations of the last stroke of the bell sounded through the silent night.

"Suddenly, with a shrill, piercing voice that went like an arrow to the guilty heart of Laval, little Pierre exclaimed:

"It is Christmas morn. O Ninon, look, there is Jesu, the Christ-Child, and the Lord of all the saints. See, He is coming toward us, bearing His cross—He is here—He is placing His pierced hands upon our heads—we are saved; and the child knelt reverently on the pavement and his sister knelt beside him.

"The monster tumbled off his sable throne and lay grovelling and groaning upon the floor, while his terror-stricken accomplices ran clattering down the stairs.

"Far above the tower even, Ninon thought she heard a burst of heavenly song, while little Pierre in rapt ecstasy cried, 'Listen.'

"Suddenly a clarion voice that Ninon heard most plainly and that thrilled her to the heart, rang up from the earth beneath.

"Harm but a hair of their heads and I will make you suffer the tortures of the damned."

"Even at their height they could hear the sound of galloping steeds.

"A dozen brave fellows swam the moat, and a moment later the drawbridge fell heavily and the clangor of a hundred hoofs rang upon it.

"Up the winding stair came the tramp of armed men. There was a thud and a groan when any resisted. The de-throned monster lay grovelling on the floor, not daring to move.

"Little Pierre still looked heavenward. Ninon looked toward the door. A moment later her lover rushed in with drawn sword; and Ninon, unharmed, with a cry of joy sprang to his heart.

"But the fire of a terrible anger burned in the young man's cheek, and he raised his gleaming sword against Laval, who now pleaded piteously for mercy.

"What mercy would you have shown these children?" thundered the youth. "What mercy have you shown to your other innocent victims?" and he was about to run him through when Ninon caught his arm, and cried:

"Stay, kill him not this Christmas morn in his terrible guilt. It was Jesu who saved us; and does He not ever say, 'Forgive—even our enemies?'"

"Slowly she drew down the raised arm of human revenge. She took from his reluctant hand the gleaming sword and returned it in its sheath.

"And now Ninon has become more than a woman—she is a Christian."

(To be continued.)

GHOSTS.

Not Col. Ingersoll's "aristocracy of the air," but real human ghosts. Ghosts that were once healthy men and women, but are now simply the "ghosts of what they once were." As we meet them, and inquire the cause of all this change, they repeat the old, old story, "a cold," "neglected cough," "catarrh," "overwork," or "dyspepsia," "liver complaint," and "constipation," with unsuccessful physicians and remedies. In offering his Golden Medical Discovery and Pleasant Purgative Pellets for the cure of the above affections, Dr. Pierce does not recommend them as a "sure cure" in all stages. For if the lungs be half wasted away, or there be a cancerous complication, no physician or medicine can cure. The Discovery is, however, an unequalled pectoral and blood-purifier. It speedily cures the most aggravated cough or cold, and in its early or middle stages, consumption. By correcting all irregularities of the stomach and liver, it readily cures bloatches, pimples, scrofulous ulcers, "bunches," or tumors. Hundreds testify that it has restored their health, after eminent physicians had failed. For constipation, use the Pellets. As a local remedy for catarrh, use Dr. Sage's Catarrh Remedy.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN ITEMS.

PRINCIPAL TULLOCH has been appointed editor of "Fraser's Magazine."

ABOUT one thousand Chinese children are attending Sunday school in San Francisco, California.

AT the City of Samaria, where was Jacob's Well, there is a Baptist church with a congregation of 100.

REPORTS from South Africa state that the Zulu Chiefs have offered to submit to British authority.

DR. NEWMAN is to receive a testimonial from Ireland in connection with his elevation to the cardinalate.

THERE has been an accession of 500 converts at Mandalay, in the Madura Mission of the American Board.

DURING the last year nine Congregational ministers in England have gone over to the Church of England.

AN English paper says, it is rumoured that Dr. Dollinger may probably return to communion with the Holy See.

IN Southern India not less than sixty thousand idolaters cast away their idols and embraced Christianity, in the year 1878.

A BAPTIST council in Minnesota has declined to ordain a man who denies the right of women to speak in meeting.

THINK OF IT! A Protestant minister, and a Methodist at that, lectured the other day in a Roman Catholic church, in Cambridge, Mass.

THE Glasgow Sabbath School Union reports the number of male scholars under its care as 38,336 and 45,599 female scholars.

IRELAND is experiencing so much benefit from the closing of the dram-shops on Sunday, that Wales is anxious for the same reform.

THE Chinese government are legislating against opium cultivation and smoking. The Christians of Peking are organizing anti-opium associations.

THE Gospel is gaining ground in Sweden. Great numbers of conversions are reported. Special attention is being given to Sunday school work.

THE New England Methodist Episcopal Conference, at its last session, adopted a resolution discountenancing the holding of camp-meetings on the Lord's day.

THE New York Presbytery has felt called to protest against the habit increasing among their families of buying and reading Sunday newspapers.

IT appears from the Registrar-General's returns, that in Ireland last year there were 25,363 marriages, 134,370 births, and 99,839 deaths. The estimated population is set down at 5,351,000.

THE smallest living in the Church of England is said to be that of Shipton, near Ludlow in the diocese of Hereford, which is valued at \$15 per annum. The population of the district in 1871 was 178.

THE Belgian Catholic press (which is 93 strong) is lively just now with denunciations of the new education bill proposed by the government. The Catholic bishops are fighting the bill most hotly.

DR. JOSEFFY, late the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, a Jewish scholar of great attainments, who has been converted to Christ, recently led the noon prayer-meeting in the Y.M.C.A. room, London.

FATHER HYACINTHE has announced that he will give "the communion in both kinds," not only to those who have confessed according to the Romish rite, but also to those who, on their own responsibility, ask for it.

PROF. ROBERTSON SMITH has been chosen to the first place on the school board of Aberdeen, Scotland, and the Rev. W. Balfour, a Free Churchman of the Begg stamp, has been chosen to a similar position in Edinburgh.

TEN men were rescued from a Pennsylvania coal mine a few days ago after having been imprisoned there for four days, the opening to the mine having caved in. They had subsisted on the flesh of a mule which was fortunately in the pit at the time of the accident.

THE religious societies of the United States seem to be fortunate this year in receiving large legacies. Deacon James Smith, of Philadelphia, an active worker in the Central Congregational Church there, has left to the American Missionary Association and the American Home Missionary Society \$20,000 each, and to the American Board \$15,000.

THE "Presbyterian Monthly Record," for April, notes a contribution to the Board of Home Missions of \$25, "the proceeds of sales of eggs of poultry raised on the roof of a dwelling-house on Fourth Avenue, New York." A very hopeless place, indeed, from which to gather a benevolent contribution, but a most forcible illustration of "where there is a will there is a way."

IN 1818, thirteen men gathered together, thirteen prayers were said, and thirteen dollars subscribed for the commencement of a place of learning for those of the Baptist faith—and then the thirteen men all went home. To-day, Madison University, N.Y., owns all its buildings and 160 acres of land, in a beautiful part of the country. It has a fine library, no debts, and between \$400,000 and \$500,000 drawing interest.

THE death of the Princess Alice on the same day of the month and week that her father died has drawn attention to the fact that Saturday has been a fatal day to the royal family of England during one hundred and sixty-seven years. William III. died Saturday, March 18th, 1702; Queen Anne, Saturday, August 1st, 1714; George I., Saturday, June 10th, 1727; George II., Saturday, October 25th, 1760; George III., Saturday, January 29th, 1820; George IV., Saturday, June 26th, 1830; the Duchess of Kent, Saturday, March 15th, 1861; the Prince Consort, Saturday, December 14th, 1861; and the Princess Alice, Saturday, December 14th, 1878.