

STORIES
POETRY

The Inglenook

SKETCHES
TRAVEL

STORY OF THE THREE ANGELS.

(By Cuthbert Davidson.)

Every minister, as far as my experience goes, has at least one individual in his parish who proves a veritable "thorn in the flesh." And such a man was Ronald Herd, the village cartwright and joiner.

He had been an inhabitant of the village of Killowan for more than ten years prior to my appearance at the manse.

At the period of which I speak he was a man nearing forty years of age. He had dark—intensely dark—hair, with eyebrows overhanging a pair of hazel eyes. His face was clean shaven, all but his nose-tine, which was of luxuriant growth, while he himself was of medium height, and well built.

He did not go to church with any great regularity. As he put the matter concisely to one of my elders—"Iang regularly to the kirk! I'm no' daft. If I wanted to become a hypocrite I might; and without mentioning any names, is it right, think you, for an elder o' the kirk to gang stotting home from a public-house on a Saturday night, and then putting in an appearance as a saint next day in the house of God?"

"That's begging the question—it is? Well, then, I just gang to the kirk in order to encourage the minister! But, a the same, I wunna say out what his preaching gangs in at one ear and out at the other on occasions. But, besides that, we've far too much preaching o' the Gospel every Sabbath. Let Mr. Davidson take up some of the social questions of the day, or what the Higher Critics are doing to elevate the spiritual condition of the people, and maybe, too, gie us his opinion how to fill empty kirks, and then I'll see about coming more regularly."

This was a fair sample of Ronald Herd's arguments. When it became a personal question then he attacked his neighbors' weaknesses, leaving the beam in his eyes all the while.

And thus it came about the day following the above remarks that Ronald paid me a visit, having just completed a small piece of work I had asked him to do.

After I had paid his account I said, "Look here, Ronald, I have been told of what you said to one of my elders about your frequent absence from church. Now, do you not think it would be a help to some of the villagers of Killowan and neighborhood if you 'patronized' the villagers less, and went more frequently to the kirk to praise the Lord instead?"

Ronald Herd was somewhat taken aback at this frontal attack. I saw he had the grace to blush as he said, "Wasn't no true what I said?"

Scotch like, I answered his question by giving another. "Why cannot you, then, set a splendid example of yourself to show what one man in Killowan at least can do? The elders and members of Killowan Kirk are all frail members of the human race, and even the minister cannot keep people from falling from the paths of truth and sobriety and reverence for sacred things. Only the grace of God can accomplish that. Why do you refuse to become a member o' the kirk?"

"Because, because—well, the fact o' the matter is, if I did I would lead a consistent Christian life, and no' be like some folk, doing more harm than guid to the profession they believe in."

"Thus you've made an admission that your Christian life is not right in the sight of God!"

"Maybe it isn't," was the answer. "But I'll mak' a bargain wi' you if you like, Mr. Davidson."

As Herd said this I imagined (and possibly it wasn't all imagination) that I noticed a twinkle in his eyes as if he had found a topic of considerable amusement and of worry to myself.

"And what is the nature of this bargain?" I asked.

"Only to give me a correct answer to a certain question, that is all."

"And what is this question?"

"How many angels can be supported by the point of a needle?"

"And if I answer this question, then what is the bargain between us to be?"

"I will come regularly to the kirk; ay, an' more than that, I will become a member if the session will have me."

At this remark of Herd's I was almost on the point of saying, like one of the old Puritans, "The Lord hath delivered thee into mine hand." But I refrained, and merely contented myself by saying, "I know the exact number."

"How many?"

"Three exactly," I answered. "Meet me tonight at the manse here at nine, and I will show you that I am right."

It was a beautiful evening. The sky was a galaxy of stars, with a silvery moon gleaning the blue.

Herd was true to his appointment. Instead of taking him into the study, as he evidently expected, I took him along the high road, bordered by birch trees, and then after going along the village street to the very end I turned to the right, and there stopped at the door of a cottage.

Going round to the back, I noticed, what I expected to find, a light burning on a table.

Through the thin screen it was quite easy to discern the inmates.

Motioning to Ronald Herd, I said to him, "Look there. Tell me what you see."

He did so.

"I see Mary Thompson sitting sewing by the aid of her lamp, while there are two wee wees lying sleeping in a bed."

"Then you have an answer to your question," I said. "You have seen the needle, and now know that three angels can be supported by it."

Even in the moonlight I caught a glimpse of the wonderment depicted in Ronald Herd's face. He saw, apparently, that he had been caught with his own peculiar weapon.

"You're quite right, Mr. Davidson," he replied. "And they're a' braw angels atweel, while Mary's a hard-working woman, keeping herself an' her house by her ain handiwork."

"And what about your bargain, Ronald?"

"I'll no' gang back on my promise," was his reply. And neither he did. And to this day none of the inhabitants of the village of Killowan have regretted Ronald Herd's decision, for it has not only changed his character in many ways, but made him a much more useful member of society than he would otherwise have been.—Saint Andrew.

THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC.

(By Dr. J. R. Miller.)

Music is not a mere amusement only, but one that combines rich instruction and lasting influence for good with the purest enjoyment. It is scarcely possible to conceive of any pleasure that surpasses an evening of song in the parlor when the whole family unite in it, perhaps with other friends, one at the piano or organ and the others grouped about, male and female voices blending, now in the pleasant ballad or glee, and now in the sacred anthem or hymn.

The songs of childhood sung thus into the heart are never forgotten. Their memories live under all the accumulations of busy years, like the sweet flowers that bloom all the winter beneath the heavy snowdrifts. They are remembered in old age when nearly all else is forgotten, and oftentimes sing themselves over again in the heart with voice sweet as an angel's when no other music has power to charm. They neglect one of the richest sources of pleasure and blessing who do not cultivate singing in their homes.

FINICAL APPETITES.

A duty which every mother owes to herself and to society is to train her child to follow the doctrine of St. Paul and "eat what is set before him." How disagreeable is the finical, notional eater many a housekeeper will testify. One man makes miserable the woman at whose house he chances to visit by his inability to eat half of the dishes that are set before him. It is not that certain viands disagree with him, but simply that he does "not care for them." Such are tomatoes, raw or cooked, fish in any form, potatoes (unless they are mashed), fruits of all kinds, except peaches, and hot puddings of every variety. Another man can not eat soups, while a third man "never tastes a salad." The trouble with all these people undoubtedly originated in their early training. In too many families the small people are allowed to declare that they "don't like this" and "won't eat that," and are humored in their whims. Indeed, it is no uncommon thing to hear a mother speak with ill-concealed pride of the fastidious appetites of her children. In treating their wishes as matters of vast importance she is laying on her shoulders a heavy burden, under which she may some day moan that "it is impossible to suit her family, try as she may."

Unless a child is made ill by a certain article of food, he should be encouraged to eat it, and his failure to enjoy it at once should be deplored, not praised. A six-year-old who had many whims and notions paid a visit to a grandmother who was wise in her generation. The dessert at his first meal in the grand-maternal abode chanced to be strawberries. He shook his head as a saucer of the sugared fruit was placed before him.

"I don't want these, grandma," he said. "Very well, dear," was the reply, and no further notice was taken of the declination.

The child continued to eye distastefully the saucer of berries, and soon remarked: "Grandma, I'm tired of strawberries."

"Yes, dear," was the only answer. "Grandma, aren't you going to give me any dessert instead of these?"

"No, dear, of course not," gently, but firmly.

"Not even a piece of cake?"

"Not even a piece of cake."

"Then," with a sorry attempt at a laugh, "I suppose I'll have to eat my berries!"

Which he proceeded to do with such zest that the sugared lobes disappeared like snowballs before a July sun. Evidently grandma was not to be tricked and coerced as was mamma.

Among the forbidden speeches at table should be, "I do not like that." And if, from any personal idiosyncrasy, a child is really unable to eat a certain dish, in which others indulge with impunity, he may be trained to pass the fact by in silence, and to feel that his peculiarity is a misfortune, not a virtue.—Table Talk.

Gives us the courage that prevails,
The steady faith that never fails.

Henry Van Dyke.

Every storm and stress and sting
Is God's way of bettering.

—Herriek Johnson.

Man's life is but a working day,
Whose tasks are set aright;
A time to work, a time to play,
And then a quiet night.
And then, please God, a quiet night,
Where palms are green and robes are white,
A long-drawn breath, a balm for sorrow,
And all things lovely on the morrow.
—Christina G. Rossetti.