

The Family Circle.

THE DYING MAN.

Thro' waving woods when fields were green
And birds were singing gay,
And all thro'out the land was seen
The flowery pomp of May,
A young man wander'd sad and slow;
His face spoke of a deepening woe
That darken'd all his way.
To him the singing of the birds
Was sadder than all human words.

"Oh, not for me the joy of spring!"
Thus spoke he with a sigh—
"So young, so very young, and yet
They say that I must die;
That ere the autumn chill and drear
Hath wasted to another year,
I in my grave shall lie.
Alas! 'tis hard, so hard, to go
And leave the sun and stars below.

"Tears, tears—I often feel them swell
With sudden burst of heart.
O earth, we never know so well
We love, till we must part.
I love the leaf, the brook, the grass,
The bee, the bud, the bird—alas,
That love should sear and smart!
Ah, how I love each little thing
Because I shall not see the spring!

"And more I love as days go by.
To-day my faltering foot
Would scorn to crush the wounded fly
Or bruise the helpless root.
For I must die the same as they.
And how could I, then, stoop to slay?
How pluck the unripe fruit?
For oft I wring my hands and cry,
Because, unripe, myself must die.

"I know they say that better things
Await on high the just—
Joy welling up from purer springs
All undefil'd by dust.
But still I love earth's lake and wood,
And God himself pronounced them good.
Besides, I laid my trust
In dreams I wove ere sickness came,
Glad dreams of love, and life, and fame.

"Well, perhaps 'tis best for God is just;
But oh, 'tis hard to know
That I must bid farewell, in dust
To lay this body low;
And hear no more the breeze at noon,
The nightingale beneath the moon,
Or see the roses blow.
Dear God, forgive this rebel's sigh,
For it is hard, so hard, to die!"

The summer pass'd; the singing birds
Sang wild 'neath southern skies;
But hectic flush and faltering words
Had mark'd death's sacrifice.
The wasted form grew weaker fast,
They laid him 'neath bare boughs at last
'Mid autumn's tears and sighs.
Ah, when the birds came back again
He did not hear their joyous strain.

—Jas. A. Tucker, in *The Week*.
University College.

[All Rights Reserved.]

MARJORIE'S CANADIAN WINTER.

BY AGNES MAULF MACHAR.

CHAPTER II.

SOME DARK DAYS.

That was the last talk that Marjorie and her father had for a good while. The chill that Mr. Fleming had taken that evening produced serious results. He felt so ill next morning that the doctor had to be summoned, and, in spite of all he could do, the attack developed into inflammation of the lungs, accompanied by a touch of bronchitis, to which he was constitutionally liable. For days he had to be kept perfectly quiet, while the doctor came every few hours and watched his patient's progress with great anxiety. Marjorie was distressed and anxious, though she scarcely realized the danger, being accustomed to her father's severe colds and attacks of bronchitis. By his express desire she went to school as usual and tried to study her lessons, though not by any means with her usual success. But when she hurried home from school, with an anxious heart, eager to know how her father felt now, and how Rebecca thought he was getting on, she was much more inclined to hover about the sick room, attempting the superfluous task of assisting the capable and experienced Rebecca in attending to the patient's comfort, than to set to work at the lessons which had never seemed so dry and difficult before. But she knew it worried

her father when she neglected her studies, and the doctor had said that much depended on keeping him perfectly quiet, so Marjorie toiled away over French verbs and German adjectives and still more tiresome sums, with a very half-hearted attention, glad when they were done and she was free to sit by her father or carry him the nourishment that Rebecca prepared. The short November days had never seemed so dreary, and the solitary meals seemed so uninviting that, but for Rebecca's energetic remonstrances, Marjorie would have half-starved herself.

"It's just too ridiculous," that sensible handmaid would declare, "for you to be fretting yourself sick, when you ought to be saving up yourself to cheer up the master; an' then, when he's gettin' well, you'll be taken down sick next, worryin' him to death almost!"

This consideration never failed to have its effects on Marjorie, when nothing else would make her feel like swallowing the food that seemed as if it would choke her.

But at last the doctor announced that he thought his patient out of danger, and that, with care, he might soon be restored to his usual state of health. Marjorie's relief and delight were so great, and the reaction to overflowing spirits so strong, that Rebecca had to be constantly warning her not to excite or fatigue her father by too frequent expressions of her satisfaction at his slowly returning strength.

One cold, bleak November afternoon, two or three days after the turning-point, she was walking home from school with her friend Nettie Lane. Marjorie was in her brightest mood, as she talked of her father's improvement. During the time when she had been feeling oppressed by anxiety, she had shyly avoided speaking of his illness, as far as it was possible for her to do so; had answered inquiries as briefly as possible, and had even avoided Nettie herself, from instinctive dread of Nettie's too ready and often thoughtless tongue. But now, with a natural desire for sympathy, she talked freely and hopefully of her father's daily increasing improvement.

But Nettie was not so sympathetic as might have been expected. At home she had heard it confidently predicted that Mr. Fleming 'would not get over it,' and people are often unwilling to admit their judgments to be wrong, even in such matters. So Nettie looked rather important, and remarked that her mother had said that appearances were often deceitful, and, any way, Mr. Fleming was in a very 'critical condition.'

"And I guess, "critical" means something pretty bad," added Nettie, "for that was what the doctor said before our baby died."

"But Dr. Stone says he thinks papa will soon be all right again," said Marjorie, keenly hurt by Nettie's blunt and unfeeling words.

"O, well! you never can tell what doctors mean by that," she added sententiously. "Mother thinks, any way, you ought to realize the danger more; for she says it would be dreadful if he were taken away while he is so unprepared."

(To be continued)

WITCHCRAFT.

This age is essentially one of progress. We are fond of congratulating ourselves on the great advances made in science, and the mechanical arts during the present century. To take a single example, look at the improved means of travel and communication we enjoy; the application of steam and electricity to the needs of modern life has worked wonders. Our whole material world has undergone a mighty revolution. But another great change has also come over us, perhaps not so palpable, but not less significant or desirable than the one just noted. The old superstitions, as they existed in the last century, have almost entirely disappeared. We are not now content to account for natural phenomena or anything else by reference to time-honored traditions. Education and the spread of gospel teaching, against which superstition can no more stand than darkness before the rising sun, have also lent their beneficent aid in overthrowing this giant outgrowth of mediæval ignorance. But when we consider the long period of

years during which the great fabric of superstition was reared, and the tenacity with which men cling to these old traditions, learned in childhood, it is a matter of no small wonder that we are now as free from their trammels as we are. Few men can be found to-day with half the credulity of even the learned of the Stuart period.

To take one instance quite within the memory of men still living, belief in the possibility of witchcraft was rather the rule than the exception. But we must go back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to find this superstition at its height. Then it was accepted on all sides as a fact indisputable. Everyone believed in witches, the king and court, clergy, lawyers, and scholars, as well as the common people, avoided them, dreaded their baneful power, and rejoiced in their execution. Even Lord Bacon admitted their possibility.

Many passages of Scripture were believed to prove the existence of witches, and to justify the harsh measures adopted for their suppression. James I., in his work on "Demonology," stated his conviction that in permitting a witch to live, they committed "odious treason against God," doubtless having in mind Ex. 22. 18, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Also Lev. 19. 32, "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards to be defiled by them;" In the new Testament, however, new light is given on the subject. Paul includes "witchcraft" in a long category of the "fruits of the flesh." We may, therefore, believe that the sin consisted, not in the possession of supernatural powers, born in the individual, but rather the claim of possessing such powers. The case of Simon of Samaria recorded in Acts i. 8, 9, will serve as a good illustration. At a later time, when Paul preached to the Ephesians, "many of them also, which used curious arts, brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all men; and they counted the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver." Thus the spirit of Christianity from the beginning has been opposed to all such practices. But through ignorance and false teaching, abuses crept into men's minds on this question as on many others. The church itself taught the existence of witches, and they soon became in the popular opinion an undoubted fact.

If we accept this definition of witchcraft as reasonable, it will readily be seen that only a step lay between considering witches as those who possessed unearthly powers, and imputing such powers to others who might be expected to deny them for fear of the penalty. If some evil came upon a family or village, such as an epidemic of disease, frequently a witch would be found and held accountable for the whole trouble. Perhaps some defenceless old woman, living alone, whose eccentric habits gave evidence of her certain guilt, would suffer death at the stake, and the villagers would once more breathe freely. Every witch had a familiar spirit among the lower animals, and besides had a power of changing into an animal at will. Two of Shakespeare's "weird sisters" in "Macbeth" were under the power of a toad and fox respectively—paddock and graymalkin. Whatever else may be thought of these old superstitions, this may be said in their favor, that they have greatly enriched and beautified much of our literature. The Elizabethan writers all made use of this means, and there are very few poetical works of that period which do not contain some reference to witches, fairies, or brownies, or some other creatures of the imagination. Shakespeare was no exception. He clearly recognized the utility of these aids in developing the plots of his dramas. We could almost as easily understand "Hamlet with Hamlet left out," as we could if we omitted the ghost of Hamlet's father.

The laws against witches, at that time, were particularly severe. Death was the penalty, but that was not all. The most excruciating torture was inflicted in order to wring from the poor victims a confession of their guilt. And, strange as it may appear, many persons acknowledged crimes which it was quite impossible they could ever have committed. This may have been,

as one has suggested, to escape further torture and suffer death rather than live any longer under the odious imputation of witchcraft. The most unjust and inhuman efforts were made to secure the conviction of accused witches. Persons unqualified to testify in ordinary trials were thought quite competent to give evidence against them. A yearly average of five hundred executions of witches took place during the reign of James I., when the population of England was but a fraction of what it is now. In-
sane asylums were then unknown, and many suffered death for witchcraft who would now be looked upon as fit subjects for such institutions. These included not only women but sometimes men also. During the Wars of the Roses, charges of witchcraft were frequently made for political purposes against persons of high degree. Among others the Duchess of Gloucester and Jane Shore were accused, and even Edward IV. and his queen did not escape.

To show what the legislators of that time thought about this question we might quote from an Act passed in James' reign, partly, it is said, out of respect for the sentiments of the king who had made a special study of the subject, and had formed some very decided views on it. Stripped of its legal phraseology, the enactment was as follows:—"If any person should use any invocation of an evil spirit or conjult, employ, entertain, feed or reward such spirit, or should take any dead body or part thereof to be used in witchcraft to the injury of another person, such offender was declared a felon." This law remained on the statute books until 1736. Many hundreds were convicted under its provisions, and the record of state trials for the period contains many interesting reports of proceedings.

But the most remarkable story of witchcraft, strange to say, had its scene of action on this continent: and not only so, but it occurred in the most enlightened and cultured part of the New World—the State of Massachusetts. Mr. Paris, a minister of the gospel, living at Salem, had a daughter and niece fall ill. The physicians failing to understand the case, suggested that the young ladies must have been bewitched. Suspicion soon pointed to three old women who were promptly arraigned and convicted. From this small beginning the fever spread with great rapidity until the whole State was seized with the mania for ferreting out and securing the conviction of witches. Nobody was safe. Men suspected their dearest friends and nearest neighbors. The prisons were filled with those on whom the dread charge was laid. But the suddenness with which the panic subsided was not less wonderful than the way in which it had commenced. A general reaction and revulsion of feeling set in over the whole State. The Governor pardoned all prisoners confined on the charge of witchcraft. Prosecutions ceased at once. Everyone condemned the policy that had been followed. A fast was proclaimed that they might beg the forgiveness of God for the errors of His people "in a late tragedy raised by Satan and his instruments."

It was not until twenty years after this that the last witch trial took place in England. Then solitary men, here and there, sprang up who began to preach, and write, and argue against such an unreasonable belief. The tide began to turn, and now the last vestige of witchcraft, as it existed two centuries ago, has disappeared. So it has been with all great reforms of whatever kind that have advanced with right and justice on their side. So it will ever be. "Truth is mighty and will prevail."

—John M. Gunn, in *The Week*.
London, Ont.

Sixty-five Protestant missionary societies are at work in India. There are 560,000 native Protestants—an increase of 150,000 in a decade. Forty years ago there were only 91,000 native Christians in India. Three-fourths of the population are Hindoos, one-fifth Mohammedans; about two and a half per cent. are Buddhists, while Christians have only about eight-tenths of one per cent. of the population. On the other hand, while the Hindoos and Mohammedans have increased only ten and seven-tenths per cent., the Christians have increased twenty-two and sixteen hundredths per cent.—a much larger increase than the rate of population.