

Mr. Murray, a negro from South Carolina in the national house of representatives, asks that the half-million dollars due to coloured soldiers in the civil war in the form of back pay and bounties, be appropriated to the establishment of industrial schools for his race in the South.

The Belgian minister of war proposes an increase in the army, which would be composed of 180,000 men, on a war footing. Eighty thousand of them are to be kept in reserve for the defence of fortresses, and 100,000 would form the offensive or army of campaign. The projects of General Minister Brassine are to be submitted to the Chambers.

Family Reading.

The Hidden Treasure.

CHAPTER IV.—CONTINUED.

THE SHEPHERD'S TALE.

"'But father!' I ventured to ask timidly, 'are you sure that this book is verily and truly the Word of God?'"

"'Yes, my son,' he replied; 'I am well assured of it!'"

"'How then?' I asked. 'I thought only heretics were burned, and why should a man be accounted a heretic only for reading the Word of God?'"

"'My father and his friends smiled, and one of them said, 'Truly, my dear lad, that is a question which has puzzled older heads than thine.'"

"'Tis indeed a grave question, and one that I will strive to explain to you at another day. But now, my dear son, attend to me. As I tell you, the lives of your father and mother depend upon your discretion. If you speak of what you have found out to any one, you may expect to see us burned alive at the stake. Do you know what that means?'"

"'I did know only too well. Only two years before, I had played the truant to see some great sight, I knew not what, which had drawn together a crowd of people over there on the border of the waste. I had slipped in between the gazers till I gained the front rank, and I had never forgotten the object which had met my eyes—the body of an aged woman consuming in the flames. The sight and the smell of that fearful sacrifice have haunted my dreams at times ever since that day."

"'I will never betray you, dear father—never! I will die first,' I exclaimed passionately. 'I will never breathe one word, if you will only let me hear the Word of God?'"

"'From that time I was a regular attendant upon the evening readings, nor would I have missed them for any reward that could have been promised me. My mother could repeat whole chapters of the Scripture, especially of the New Testament, and she caused me to learn them also. For she said, 'you may not always have the book. It may be destroyed, or you may have to leave home; but what is stored in your memory, no man may take from you.' Accordingly she caused me to learn by heart large portions of the sayings of our Lord, with the accounts of His miracles!'"

"'Did our Lord work miracles like St. Guthbert and St. Dunstan, and the holy image at Glastonbury?' asked Jack."

"'He wrought many wonderful works, such as healing the sick, and giving sight to the blind!' replied the shepherd. 'As I said, my mother caused me to learn by heart many portions of Scripture, and I might have learned more, had I but improved my opportunities."

"'This went on for four years, and no one ever found us out. At the end of that time, it became necessary for me to do something towards earning my own living, for though my father owned his own land, yet his farm was but poor, and he had met with losses, like almost every one else, in the civil wars. Moreover, there was not more work to be done on our land than my father and brother could accomplish, and my parents had, like your good father, a great horror of idleness. So I was sent to keep sheep on the Stonehill farm, across the waste yonder, and quite on the other side of the parish. I did not come home for a year, and then it was upon a mournful occasion. My father had

been arrested and thrown into jail for a heretic, and not all the interest which my good master, Sir William Peckham, exerted in his behalf, could save him. My brother was obliged to flee for his life, and what became of him I cannot say. I never saw or heard from him again. I was permitted to see my father, and receive his blessing, but only in the presence of witnesses. His enemies would gladly have pushed matters to further extremities, and have turned his wife and child out into the world to wander as beggars, if indeed they had left us that resource; but again Sir William stood our friend. May God reward him, therefore, and give him his portion among His saints. He was a man of might and power, and he used his power well. The cottage where my father and grandfather lived was assured to my mother, with provision for her life, and I was taken into the good knight's household, he thinking, I suppose, that I should be safe while attending upon him. I followed his fortunes faithfully for more than forty years, and I supported his head when he died, like a valiant and godly knight, on the field of battle. His son, the present knight, hath ever been kind to me. He would have given me a home in his own hall, had I desired it. But I was ever a lover of quiet and solitude, and found more pleasure in following the sheep on the hillside, than in sitting among the servants in the great hall. Besides—it may be a vain fancy—but I have always cherished a secret hope that I might find my father's great book secreted somewhere about the old cottage!'"

"'Then it was not destroyed!' said Jack."

"'Not that I know of. It was never found, however, after my father's death. He, fearing for its safety, had bestowed it in some new hiding-place on the day he was arrested, and he had no time to tell my mother where he had placed it. The book was written on parchment, and strongly bound in leather, and my father was wont to wrap it in leather when he put it away. It would not, therefore, be easily destroyed."

"'Then it may be in existence now at this day!' said Jack. 'Oh, uncle, if we could but find it!'"

"'Would to God I might do so!' replied the old man, looking upward and clasping his hands. 'I could depart in peace, could I but once more hold the Word of God in these hands. And, son Jack—for dear you are to me as my own son—I know not but it may be a fond fancy, but, by times, something tells me that I shall see it again before I die!'"

CHAPTER V.

TALK ON THE HILLSIDE.

From this day forward Jack had a new interest, a new object in life—to find the old Bible. Day by day he explored every possible hiding-place, turning things upside down in all directions, and rummaging, as old Margery declared, worse than a rat, or than the goblin which used to visit her father's barn. Over and over again did he take the false bottom out of the little footstool where the book had been concealed, and gaze into the empty space as though he might somehow have overlooked the cumbrous volume.

The book haunted his very slumbers. Often did he dream of finding it, and once the impression was so vivid that he arose and went before sunrise to the little dell where in his dreams he had seemed to find it concealed under a flat stone. But alas, there was no such stone to be found, and he came back a little ashamed of his own credulity and having gained nothing but a prodigious appetite for his breakfast.

Jack had one consolation for all his failures, and that indeed was a great one. He made the shepherd repeat to him all that he could remember of Holy Scripture. The old man's memory, though somewhat impaired as to late occurrences, was as vivid as ever for all things which he had learned in his youth, and he was able to repeat whole chapters of Wickliffe's version of the Bible, which, rude and imperfect as it was, had been as a savour of life unto life to many hungry souls. Jack was astonished at all the things he heard and still more at those he did not hear; and not a little grieved that some of his favourite legends of saints had no place in the Scriptures at all.

(To be continued.)

A Tactful Empress.

The Empress of Japan—being that sweetest of all sweet creatures, a womanly woman—has upon many occasions openly evinced her deep interest in the wee ones of Japan, giving freely to all institutions that exist to benefit them in any way, even practicing all sorts of touching little economies that she may be able to swell her contributions to certain charities that most interest her.

The conduct of this ideal woman upon a certain sad occasion her devoted subjects are never weary of describing. Prince Iwakura, a fearless Japanese leader in the momentous days of the crisis—from which the lovely archipelago is still trembling in its subsidence to what seems assured stability—lay dying in his *yashiki*. The Empress announced her intention of paying Iwakura a visit in person. The poor prince, weak, and, as I have said, about to die, was thrown into a dangerous state of excitement upon receiving the news, but he managed to borrow from some hidden nervous force sufficient strength to grasp his writing box and brushes and to paint her an urgent but most respectful request not to think of coming to him. He forced upon her as an excuse for declining so great an honour the fact of his rapidly approaching death, and his consequent inability to acknowledge her visit even with a sixteenth part of the homage it demanded. He begged her to deign to kindly consider how ill he must be when it remained an impossibility to throw off the malady even for her entertainment. In reply, winged with speed, came a dear little missive whose import was as follows:—

"I come not as your Empress, but as the daughter of your fond well-wisher and coadjutor, and as your own anxious friend."

Shorn of all ostentation and display, the Empress arrived, and remained beside her grateful subject until his final summons.

Some years ago, when the imperial palace was burned, the unselfish Empress, amid all the excitement and discomfort she was for the nonce called upon to endure in a hasty flight to comfortless old *yashiki*, thinking first of her subjects' natural concern for her comfort, sat down and wrote them a dainty little rhyme, which proclaimed as erroneous the report that she had changed her residence. It coyly asserted that her home had always been in the hearts of her people, and that she sincerely hoped that neither by flame nor by cold could she be driven from that dear abode.

Dyspepsia seldom causes death, but permits its victims to live on in misery. Hood's Sarsaparilla cures dyspepsia and all stomach troubles.

A Flower that Grows in Snow.

One of the greatest curiosities is the snow flower that blooms in the northern portion of Siberia, where the earth is continually covered with a coating of snow and frost. This wonderful plant shoots forth from the frozen soil on the first day of the year, and reaches the height of about three feet; it blooms on the third day, remains open twenty-four hours and then returns to its original elements. It shines for a single day, then the stem, leaves and flower are converted into snow. The leaves are three in number. The flower is star-shaped, its petals about half an inch wide. On the third day the extremities of the leaves show little glistening specks, like diamonds, about the size of the head of a pin. These are the seeds of this queer flower.

Fact and Hearsay.

A common deviation from truthfulness seldom sufficiently guarded against is the practice of stating as fact what is only hearsay, and declaring as certainties theories and opinions which the speaker has never established for himself. The spirit of truth will always make a man hesitate, or at least speak with reticence on subjects of which he is not the master. Opinions adopted from the lips of another are not his own; he has not earned them by any mental labour, nor has he the least right to advance them as well-founded truths. Yet nothing is more common.