

THE FUNERAL.

(From the Rev. F. E. Paget's Tales of the Village.)

Late in the afternoon of a "brief November day" I found myself approaching the church of Abbot's-Ardenne, a village some two miles south-west of my own parish of Yatehall, and on the opposite side of the river Trent.

The day was not ungenial for the time of year—indeed, the air was soft and warm; but there is something of peculiar melancholy in that season, when the rich and varied hues of autumn having passed away, its sombre accompaniments only remain; when nature has not assumed her winter garb; and when, instead of clear bright skies, and frosty, but bracing and healthful air, dark, leaden clouds invest with one monotonous hue of sullen grey every feature of the landscape, or thick, penetrating vapours obscure it from the sight. It was so on the present occasion; but the incessant rains and equinoctial gales had ceased; and the whole atmosphere was so overcharged with moisture, that the drops fell fast and thick from the boughs of the now almost leafless trees, and wreaths of mist hung upon the meadows, and followed the windings of the swollen river. All around me was dank and cheerless; and I felt the depressing influences which the sight of decaying nature can hardly fail to produce in those who rejoice in its opening bloom.

But if the day was melancholy, not less so was the task which I was about to be engaged.

My friend Walter Long, the vicar of Ardenne, had that morning requested me to read the burial-service over one of his parishioners; a lady with whom he and his family had long lived in such habits of friendship and daily intercourse, that he felt himself quite unequal to the personal discharge of the painful duty which had devolved upon him. Nor could I wonder at his distress; for the deceased Mrs. Fullerton was one of those persons whose loss is felt acutely, far beyond their own immediate household; and she had been cut off, after a very few days of severe suffering, in almost the prime of life. Her husband, who had died twelve or fourteen years previously, had placed such unbounded confidence in her, that he had left her his estate of Godsholme for life, and constituted her sole guardian of his son and only child.

At Godsholme Mrs. Fullerton had resided from the commencement of her widowhood; the only companions of her solitude being her son, and a little girl, the orphan child of a distant relative of her late husband, whom she had adopted in infancy, and whose education was at once the anxiety and solace of her life. But although Mrs. Fullerton lived in comparative retirement, seldom moving from home, or visiting for visiting's sake, she was, perhaps, the most universally popular person in the neighbourhood, and her society was courted as that of a woman of most pleasing manners and cultivated mind. But the deceased lady was much more than this; for while she exercised at home the hospitality which was befitting her means and position in life, and thereby gained the good will of her equals, it was among her inferiors that her character was most truly known and appreciated. Like the good Shunamite of old, she might have said, "I dwell among mine own people;" (2 Kings iii. 13.) and her own people had daily experience of the advantages which that simple expression secured to them. Charitable in the true sense of the term (neither profuse, that is, nor indiscriminate; neither encouraging indolence, nor allowing herself to be imposed upon), she was as much revered as loved. Compassionate and kind-hearted, she grudged neither cost nor pains, whenever it was in her power, to alleviate the trials of those who were in sickness or sorrow. Courteous and gentle, yet sincere and open as the day, she said what she meant, and meant what she said. Sound in judgment, and with fewer prejudices than fall to the lot of most persons, she was always a safe adviser in difficulties, and was ever ready to aid with her counsels her poorer neighbours; among whom, indeed, she was looked upon as the universal referee. These were some of the qualities which endeared her to her dependents, and fitted her to discharge the duties of her appointed station.

She had, however, yet higher claims on our regard and admiration; for she was one of the humblest, most simple-minded Christians with whom it has been my happiness to become acquainted; and she was quite a pattern to those around her in the quiet practical discharge of religious duties. Indeed, religion was with her the one object of existence: by this all the petty details of her daily life were hallowed; from this they all took their tone; to this all her thoughts and wishes (so far as human infirmity permits) were referred. Upon mature reflection and conviction, a sound and zealous Churchwoman, she became on that ground a peculiar blessing to the parish where she dwelt. Ever, in carrying out her schemes of usefulness, did she act in subordination to the parochial minister, as unto God's priest and Christ's ambassador. Never did she permit herself to meddle—(no common praise for zeal in these times!)—with matters which were beyond her province; never did she interfere with a trust which had not been committed to her; never did she sanction with her name or influence, measures, persons, or societies, which the clergyman of the parish did not approve. Her happiness (and her wisdom) was to act under him, to co-operate with him in his labours, and to aid him in them to the full extent of her means; not giving grudgingly or of necessity, when called on to devote a portion of her substance to pious uses, but receiving the invitation to do so with thankfulness, and esteeming it a very high privilege to be permitted in any way to contribute to God's honour, or the extension of His kingdom.

"And being such as this," thought I to myself, as I walked along, "how mysterious is the dispensation which has thus suddenly cut off such an exemplary person from the land of the living, while her light was shining so brightly before men, and she was adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things! 'Her sun is gone down while it is yet day.' (Jer. xx. 9.) and, oh, how sorely will its light be needed! Her boy, just of an age when such a parent's advice and guidance would be most valuable. Little Mildred Cliford, too poor, thing! deprived of a mother's care, and left, I fear, without a home or a friend in the world! Well, God's ways are not our ways, neither are our thoughts His thoughts! Often does He remove the person most needed, at the time apparently most needful for their continuance among us; as if to shew us that He requires not the aid of man, and that He can work His will as effectually with one instrument as with another. There is comfort in this; and there is comfort in the thought that by being summoned thus early, poor Mrs. Fullerton may have been saved many a sorrow and many a trial. It is a most consoling doctrine that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come; and how cheering are the words of the book of Wisdom: 'Though the righteous be prevented with death, yet shall he be in rest. For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years; but wisdom is the grey hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age.'" (Wisd. iv. 7, 9.)

Thus musing with myself, I approached the church-yard of Ardenne. The bell was tolling; the ligh-gates were already set open for the admission of the funeral train; and to my right a mound of fresh earth shewed the position of the new-dug grave. I afterwards learned that it was by her own especial desire that no vault or resting-place within the church had been prepared for her; she desired, she said, "that no difference should be made between her remains and those of her fellow-Christians who were sleeping round her: earth should be restored to earth, and dust to dust."

I entered the church; but finding I had arrived too soon, I returned once more into the open air, and strove to bring my mind into perfect union with the solemn duty I was about to perform; and by meditating on the mortality of others, to prepare the more effectually for my own.

It was a lovely spot that humble cemetery. The church itself, built, as so many of our country churches are, close to the manor-house, possesses considerable architectural beauty, and seems from the earliest times to have been an object of constant interest to the lords of the soil, whose grim and mutilated effigies lie recumbent on altar-tombs of sculptured alabaster, or are still to be traced on the monumental brasses which nearly cover the chancel-floor. The church-yard is surrounded on three sides by the gardens and pleasure-grounds of Ardenne Court; and the tall cypress and dark umbrageous cedar, together with the venerable yews, throw their deep shadows over the surface of a smooth and neatly kept lawn, which, but for those long narrow hillocks that appear at intervals, and the tombstones which now and then break the regularity of the outline, is but little likely to convey the thought that the worm of corruption holds his feast below.

Yet, mingled with so much calm beauty, there was an air of solemn sadness around. The entire seclusion of the spot; the silence, unbroken save by the occasional tollings of the bell, and the cawing of the rooks in the adjoining grove; the sombre hue of the evergreens, which, for the most part, surrounded it; the heaps of withered leaves that strewed the ground on every side,—all these were calculated to impress the mind with grave and solemn thoughts, and to reiterate (though with still, small voice) the awful exhortation, to watch and pray, because we "know not the hour."

And now the bell, which had hitherto given out its tone at distant and broken intervals, became at once more regular, and was tolled more rapidly, till, as the dark forms of the mourners were discerned among the trees, the full peal burst forth joyously,—not jarring on the feelings, or mocking the sorrows of the living, but welcoming, as it were, the dead in Christ to their calm repose, and speaking the Church's greeting to such as, resting from their labours, were about to be committed to their consecrated bed, in sure and certain hope of a glorious re-awakening.

The funeral-train advanced, and I went forth to meet it. The intention of the family of the deceased lady had been, that the solemnity should be as unostentatious and private as possible; and, indeed, some half-dozen of her kinsmen and friends formed the original procession. But as it proceeded on its way, the numbers had augmented rapidly; and when the corpse entered the churchyard, it was followed by an inconsiderable portion of the population of Ardenne. The poor (so often spoken of as though they were unfeeling, because they do not with sickly sentimentality talk about what they feel, and because those who speak of them do not understand them) have their own quiet ways of shewing gratitude; and a few blunt words of sympathy from them, or some sincere yet simple-hearted demonstration of good-will, are, to my mind, worth all the empty, fluent professions of that class, which is apt to arrogate to itself the exclusive possession of delicacy and refinement.

Such evidence of their kindly feeling was not wanting on the present occasion. Mrs. Fullerton had been, as I have already intimated, in a special manner, the friend and favourite of her poorer neighbours. As of the patriarch Job, so might it be said of her, that "when the ear heard her, then it blessed her; when the eye saw her, it gave witness to her; and the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon her; and she caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." (Job xxix. 11-13.) And now, when her bounty and kindness had ceased, and when no interested motives for a show of gratitude could exist, they, whom that bounty had supported, or whose trials her many acts of kindness had lightened, voluntarily came forward to pay their humble tribute of respect to her memory, and of affectionate regret. The children whom she had taught at school, their parents, and not a few infirm, tottering creatures, who had scarce left their cottages for months, formed the rear of the mourning company. "Madam Fullerton," they said, "had been a good friend to them and theirs, and they would even give the last of her." So they followed her to her grave; some few habited in decent mourning, but the rest in their usual daily dress,—only, perhaps, a handkerchief that once was black, or a bit of faded ribbon, or rusty crape, had been added for the occasion, as the only outward signs of woe which their humble means afforded. But there was sorrow on every face—the index of an aching heart within.

Thus accompanied, the corpse was carried, for the last time, into the house of God; the service within the walls of the church was concluded; and then, once more, the procession was formed. The grave had been dug at the foot of a taper cross of stone, of exquisite design, which, in this burial-ground (and, I believe, in some few others), has still been preserved unimpaired; undamaged by the storms of centuries, and (happier still!) unbroken by puritanical violence; fixed with its massive base amid the relics of mortality, and pointing, with exulting head, to that bright world where tears shall be wiped from off all faces, and where He for ever dwells who hath taken the sting from death, who hath tamed the strength of hell, and made the grave the gate of immortality.

Hither the coffin is borne; it is lowered into its narrow resting-place; "earth" is consigned "to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust;" the prayers are concluded, the blessing pronounced, and the service of the Church is over.

Then it was that the two persons most deeply concerned in this impressive and melancholy scene appeared to become sensible, for the first time, of its stern reality. Hitherto, under the novelty of their trial, or the stunning effects of grief, they had remained utterly passive, instinctively doing what was suggested to them, but scarcely seeming conscious of the extent of their bereavement. It is ever thus in severe afflictions: it is not at first that the heart knoweth its own bitterness; the sharpest pangs are not felt till excitement is over, and there is no pressing call for further exertion. Up to this time exertion was needed; and, no doubt, both of them had exerted their utmost for the sake of the other—Mark for Mildred, and Mildred for Mark; and so they had stood, side by side, their faces indeed buried in their handkerchiefs, but without that violence of outward grief which undisciplined

minds would have given way. When, however, the funeral-service ceased, and the crowd on either side fell back, in order to allow the youthful mourners to take a last look at the coffin which contained the remains of her whom both had loved with the depth of filial devotion,—then it seemed that for greatness of their desolation burst upon them; for every tinge of colour faded from the lad's fine manly face, as Mark Fullerton drew Mildred's arm within his own, and led her forward to the foot of the grave; while she, brushing away with her hand the long, dishevelled ringlets of fair hair that covered her beautiful face, raised her eyes with deep affection towards him; and then, giving one long, piercing, agonised look into the open grave, hid her face in her hands, and sobbed as though her heart was breaking.

"Oh! that last look!—the last!—even though it be in death and sorrow—the last look! how vividly is its remembrance borne in our bosoms while life continues!"

After some brief pause, Mark and Mildred turned away in overwhelming grief from the spot where they had been standing; the other mourners slowly follow; the sexton assumes their place; and, as the crowd retires, that sound is heard which, often as I hear it, I never yet could listen to with indifference, and which I think is the most curdling, the most chilling, and the saddest that ever falls on mortal ear,—the sharp hollow rattle occasioned by the first spadeful of gravel falling on the coffin-lid, succeeded by duller and duller reverberations, as the soil is filled in.

"Ah, well-a-day!" I heard an old man exclaim to his lame companion, as I followed them down the church-walk; "well-a-day, Becky! if ever there was a good Christian soul, I do believe she lies in that grave yonder."

"You may say that, neighbour; and what we poor creatures shall do without her, the Lord only knows." "Ay, ay; many a comfortable bit and sup have we had from her kitchen, and many a yard of good warm clothing; more, by token, she ordered Master Saunders to make this coat for me, for she said she couldn't abide my wearing such an old one on Christmas-day."

"Poor lady! she little thought then that you would so soon wear it at her burying," rejoined Becky. "We shall be sore losers now she's gone; for it's not like that they young things will take much thought about us poor folk."

"And that's true," said the old man; "they'll have gayer thoughts by and by, I'll warrant them, for all they are so downcast and fearful to-night."

"I'll tell you what it is, Simeon Clayton; they may be light-hearted again before long; they are young, and it is but natural; but they will never be as they have been: their eyes are opened this day, and they have learned what this world is made of,—sorrow and trial for the young; and for the old, aches and pains, as we know full well, Simeon. God help us!"

"Yes," thought I to myself; "poor children, their eyes are opened to-day. There is no sorrow in after-life like the sorrow of the first bereavement. As we grow in years, we become callous, case-hardened, selfish; our thoughts are centred in ourselves; our own interests and comforts are the things which occupy our minds; we set aside painful thoughts, and so habituate ourselves to look on calmly and composedly, as friends and kinsfolk drop into their graves. But in youth it is not so; the warm feelings of the heart are then as yet unchilled by the world's influence; our bright hopes are then undimmed by disappointment; our generous, open tempers are as yet not soured by self-love. Yet, bitter and enduring as is an early affliction, the lesson which it is calculated to convey is far more easily learned in youth than in maturer years. True, the grave once opened, never closes till we are ourselves laid within it; the tears shed in our first bereavement are never wholly dried; all after-sorrows take their tone from that absorbing one. Still, in my estimation, they are the happiest whose trials come upon them ere the mind of innocent and simple childhood has passed away, and with it the trusting, child-like habits of submission, which are the best preparation for making God's will our own, and for acquiring the most difficult of all things—the hard-learned lesson of obedience. May the present grievous chastening yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby!"

With these thoughts in my mind, I proceeded on my way, enjoying the balmy freshness of the autumnal evening. A light air sprang up; the mist that hung upon the lowlands was dispelled; the sun, so long obscured, burst forth for a while, warming, cheering, invigorating the face of nature; and then, amid its cloudy pavilion of gold, and purple, and all other gorgeous hues, went down behind the roof of Ardenne church,—appropriate termination to the scene in which I had been engaged—meet emblem of the rest of those who sleep in Jesus, and who, when their light has shone its appointed time before men, shed forth accumulated lustre in the moment of their departure, and then fading from before us, sink to rise upon another hemisphere, and beam out with un fading splendour in a pure and cloudless sky.

THE BELLS OF LIMERICK.

There is a curious and interesting tradition connected with the bells of Limerick Cathedral. The story is prettily told, and will bear repetition. They were, it is said, brought originally from Italy, where they were manufactured by a young native, who grew justly proud of the successful result of years of anxious toil expended in their production. They were subsequently purchased by the prior of a neighbouring convent; and with the profits of this sale the young Italian procured a little villa, where he had the pleasure of hearing the tolling of his bells from the convent cliff, and of growing old in the bosom of domestic happiness. This however was not to continue. In some of those broils, whether civil or foreign, which are the undying worm in the peace of a fallen land, the good Italian was a sufferer among many. He lost his all; and, after the passing of the storm, found himself preserved alone amid the wreck of fortune, friends, family and home. The convent in which the bells, the *chefs-d'œuvre* of his skill, were hung, was razed to the earth, and the bells were carried to another land.—The unfortunate owner, haunted by his memories, and deserted by his hopes, became a wanderer over Europe. His hair grew gray, and his heart withered, before he again found a home and a friend. In this desolation of spirit, he formed the resolution of seeking the place to which the treasures of his memory had been finally borne. He sailed for Ireland, proceeded to the Shannon, the vessel anchored in the pool near Limerick, and he hired a small boat for the purpose of landing. The city was now before him; and he beheld St. Mary's steeple, lifting its turretted head above the smoke and mist of the old town. He sat in the stern and looked fondly toward it. It was an evening so calm and beautiful as to remind him of his own native haven in the sweetest time of the year—the death of the spring. The broad stream appeared like one smooth mirror, and the little vessel glided through it. On a sudden, amid the general stillness,

the bells tolled from the cathedral; and the rowers rested on their oars, and the vessel went forward with the impulse it had received. The aged Italian looked toward the city, crossed his arms on his breast, and lay back in his seat; home, happiness, early recollections, friends, family—all were in the sound, and went with it to his heart. When the rowers looked round, they beheld him with his face still turned towards the cathedral; but his eyes were closed, and when they landed they found him dead!—Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall's Ireland.

BISHOP BARRINGTON.

In all his ecclesiastical appointments it was his wish and intention to select individuals whose talents, principles, and attainments, best fitted for the particular situations to which he appointed them. Nor were his regards confined to men eminent for learning or genius in their sacred profession. He loved and valued Christian piety for its own sake; and the humblest curate that came within his notice, in whose character and conduct he traced anything of the image of that Redeemer, in whom alone was his trust, was sure to attract his esteem, and, if needful, his support. Party names with him weighed nothing, principle and conduct were every thing.

His firmness of purpose, in adhering to these principles of action, was sometimes put to a severe test, but his presence of mind, united to a winning courtesy, never failed him on any such occasion. It was his constant maxim of conduct, and he often gave it in counsel to patrons, never to make promises, nor even to encourage expectations. He was one day accosted at court by Queen Charlotte, for whom he entertained an affectionate and useful respect, as follows: "My Lord, I have a favour to ask of you. The living of—, in your disposal, is, I understand, now vacant, and I shall be greatly obliged if you will bestow it upon Mr.—for whom I feel much interested." The Bishop, in the most courteous manner, signified, in reply, his desire to meet any wish expressed by her Majesty; but added, that he felt bound to apprise her of the rule which he had invariably laid down to himself with respect to all such applications. He had no sooner given utterance to it, than the Queen stopped further explanation by exclaiming, "My Lord, I will not say a word more; and I beg that no wish of mine may lead you to violate so golden a rule."

But though he never made promises, he always had a list, known only to God and himself, of the names of those who, he had reason to believe, were most deserving of advancement and patronage.

The following incident illustrates at once his unending principle and great kindness. A near relation of his, who had been gay and thoughtless, applied to him for advice about taking orders, adding, that he could venture to say, a great improvement had recently taken place in his principles and habits. The Bishop received him kindly; but before he would enter upon the subject, stipulated for the most frank and explicit replies to any questions he should put to him. In this way an acknowledgment was obtained, that he was influenced by a hope that, as his relation, he would ordain and provide for him. And it further came out, that his wishes were fixed upon a particular living then vacant, or on the point of becoming so, the value of which was about 500*l.* per annum. "And would this amount of income," inquired the Bishop, "entirely satisfy your wishes?" He eagerly replied in the affirmative. "You shall have it, then," replied his Lordship; "but not in the way you propose. I cannot reconcile it to my sense of duty to ordain you, but I will immediately transfer as much stock into your name as will produce an annual sum equal to that which you have declared to be the acme of your wishes, and may it prove to you all that you anticipate."—*Harford's Life of Bishop Burgess.*

FATE OF THE PERSECUTING ROMAN EMPERORS.

Of all the Emperors who had been invested with the purple, either as Augusti or Caesars, during the persecution of the Christians, his [Constantine's] father alone, the protector of Christianity, had gone down to an honoured and peaceful grave. Dioclesian, indeed, still lived, but in what, no doubt, appeared to most of his former subjects, an inglorious retirement. However the philosophy of the abdicated emperor might teach him to show the vegetables of his garden, as worthy of as much interest to a mind of real dignity as the distinctions of worldly honour; however he may have been solicited by a falling and desperate faction to resume the purple, his abdication was, no doubt, in general, attributed to causes less dignified than the contempt of earthly grandeur. Conscious derangement of mind (a malady inseparably connected, according to the religious notions of Jey, Pagan, probably of Christian, during that age, with the divine displeasure), or remorse of conscience, was reported to embitter the calm decline of Dioclesian's life.—Instead of an object of envy, no doubt, in the general sentiment of mankind, he was thought to merit only aversion or contempt. Maximian (Herculeus), the colleague of Dioclesian, after resuming the purple, engaging in base intrigues, or open warfare, against his son Maxentius, and afterwards against his protector Constantine, had anticipated the sentence of the executioner. Severus had been made prisoner, and forced to open his own veins. Galerius, the chief author of the persecution, had experienced the most miserable fate; he had wasted away with a slow and agonizing and loathsome disease. Maximian alone remained, hereafter to perish in miserable obscurity. *Milman's History of Christianity.*

Advertisements.

Table with 3 columns: THEOLOGICAL WORKS, Price, and Author/Publisher. Includes titles like 'Taylor's Holy Living and Dying', 'Essays on Romanism', 'The Christian's Duty', etc.

Advertisements for various businesses including H. & W. Rowsell (Stationery, Booksellers), New Stationery Warehouse, H. M. Hirschfeldman (University of Heidelberg), Dental Surgery (A. V. Brown), Dr. Primrose, J. E. Pell (Carver, Gilder), Fashionable Tailoring Establishment, Thomas J. Preston (Woolen Draper and Tailor), British Saddlery Warehouse, Alexander Dixon (Saddlery, Harness), Owen, Miller & Mills (Coach Builders), and The Phoenix Fire Assurance Co.