

THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON.

We sat by the rivers of Babel and wept, When we thought on the land where our forefathers slept;

Our sad hearts were breaking, our harps were unstrung, As on the green willows they silently hung.

No—never, proud heathens, these valleys shall ring With the music of Zion, for how shall I sing The songs of the Lord, while the hill and the vale Are profaned by the temples and worship of Baal!

In the day I forget how the Gentile defiled The City of God! and His people reviled, Let the Sill from my right hand forever depart, And no tongue fall to utter the wish of my heart!

O ye daughters of Salem, oh, weep for our race! Who are exiles from home in this desolate place— Oh, weep for our kinsmen who fell by the sword! Oh, weep for the temple—the house of the Lord!

Proud Princess of Babel, the Lord hath declared, By the mouth of His prophet, thou shalt not be spared; The crown from thy brow by the Mole shall be torn, And thy beauty shall vanish like dew in the morn!

Paris, Ont. H. M. STRAMMING.

AT THE DOOR WITH SOME OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

I.

Most of us have known people, have had them for dear friends, maybe, who could be charming at all times, but who were perhaps most charming in those two or three minutes, when they lingered at the door, finishing off, as it were, the end of a night's conversation.

Left a track of light behind her heel, Had struck and flashed like amorphous steel.

It is a gift that, with given moderate ability, may easily be cultivated, or might be, if art in social life have not departed with powder, shoe buckles and small clothes. We shall never, perhaps, know what we have lost by the departure of the stately life, in society at least, of the 18th century.

And here I beg you to observe my astuteness in getting a chance to introduce to the reader's notice the title of these papers, when I had, apparently (and as a matter of fact too), lost my way in a hopeless entanglement of subjects and ideas.

You see it gives me a chance to remark that I must have been a very glorious thing to have had Sydney Smith in to dinner, and have him stand in the door-way (let me hope there would be no draught) and chat for awhile, and then just give us one "good thing" as a parting benediction.

His jokes were serious and his serious jokes.

In a very interesting book on Holland House, by the Princess Marie Leichenstein, there is a story about Sydney Smith which I dislike. It is alleged that the conversation turned on the wickedest man in history, and Sydney Smith is alleged to have said, in the presence of the Prince Regent, "The Regent Orleans, and he was a Prince." And the Regent is alleged to have said, "I should have given the preference to the Abbé Dubois, and he was a priest, Mr. Sydney." I always take leave to doubt that very cruel and very objectionable story on grounds that are good, and chiefly from what literary men know as "internal evidences."

In Macaulay's life by Trevelyan there is a little incident which comes in pat for my purpose.

"In the spring of 1829," says his cousin, Mrs. Conybeare, "we were stopping in Ormond street. My chief recollection of your uncle during that visit is on the evenings when we copied verses. All the family were quick at it, but his astounding memory made him super-ominent. When the time came to be off to bed at his chambers, he would rush out of the room

after uttering some long-sought line, and would be pursued to the top of the stairs by one of the others who had contrived to recall a verse which served the purpose, in order that he might not leave the house victorious, but he, with the hall door open in his hand, would shriek back a crowning effort and go off triumphant."

Until we read Macaulay's Life we had no idea, most of us, that the stately old gentleman who marshalled his sentences as a field officer marshals his troops, and put them through their series of splendid and sparkling movements to quick and slow time, could have had so much of the boy in him. The "Life" did much to make Macaulay a more lovable character in literary history, and added him to the list of famous people whom we should love to have chatting with us at the door after an evening's amusing talk.

Walter Scott would be facile perhaps on such an occasion. The man was full of humor as a human being could be, and by humor we must not always understand fun, but quaintness, oddness, pathos as well as amusement, the tears as well as the laughter of literature. What a boon companion the great novelist must have been! It was a time when society was pretty lively, and when a stranger went into the northern lands he was greeted with the Shakespearean line—

"He'll teach thee to drink deep and long."

At Abbotsford, in Edinburgh, or London, the great man shone with almost undiminished lustre for a great many years. His books we all of us know. I always pity a boy who has not read Walter Scott; he has lost so much that life can't make it up to him. I could pardon many a traitor, if I were a school master, if I could be assured that the morning had been spent in watching Quentin Durward's struggle with the Wild Boar of Ardennes, or the siege of Front de Bauc's Castle by the Black Knight and Robin Hood. A very great man of our day (the greatest mind in Europe, perhaps, at this moment), no less than the Rev. John Henry Newman, reads Walter Scott to this day, and has obtained much from his style, and quotes him still with the most exquisite aptness. I have an idea that it was Walter Scott's labors in popularizing medieval history that we owe in great part that revival of middle age reverence and that study of the middle age church which have landed so many great names in the bark with Peter during the past forty years.

"Scott," says Irving, "as usual took the lead, leaping along with great activity and in joyous mood, giving scraps of border rhymes and border stories; two or three times in the course of our walk there were drizzling showers, which, I supposed, would put an end to our ramble, but my companion trudged on as unconcernedly as if it had been fine weather. At length I asked whether we had not better seek some shelter. 'True,' said Scott, 'I did not remember that you were not accustomed to our Scottish mists. This is a lachrymose climate, always showering. We, however, are children of the mist and must not mind a little whimpering of the clouds any more than a man must mind the weeping of a hysterical wife. As you are not accustomed to be wet through, as a matter of course, in a morning's walk, we will bide a bit under the lee of this bank until the shower is over.' Taking a seat under the shelter of a thicket, he called to his man George for his tartan; then turning to me—'Come,' said he, 'come under my plaidie, as the old song goes; so making me nestle down beside him, he wrapped a part of the plaid round me, and took me, as he said, under his wing.' So let us think of them together, the rugged Scotch genius, and the gentle American humorist; the one wrestling with gigantic ill-fortune, the other gliding gently through a little-troubled life; the one wasting in vain his giant intellect in the effort to found a family at Abbotsford; the other going through life alone, in quietude and sweetness of living, true to the memory of the one love of his youth who slept under the daisies. A good many of us would give a good deal thus to nestle with Scott under the lee of a storied cliff and hear him tell his stories of old Scotland—

"Of lovers' sighs, of ladies' charms, Of witches' spells, of warriors' arms, Of patriot battles fought of old, By Wallace mighty and Bruce the bold, Of later fields of feud and night, When, pouring from the Highland height, The Scottish clans, in headlong sway, Had swept the scarlet ranks away."

MARTIN J. GRIFFIN.

Ottawa, June 24th.

(To be continued.)

IF.

There are few words in our language more lightly, carelessly and continually uttered than the little seemingly insignificant word *if*, yet there are few, if any, fraught with more weighty meaning, or entering more deeply into the constitution of all things. It expresses the conditionality of the universe with all its complicated relations; it is the link which unites cause and effect, the term which conveys the mutual dependence of all things, one upon another. Certain it is that every event that transpires and

every state of things that exists is the combined result of millions of events and states that have preceded it, and that if any of them had been different, the whole of what we now call the present would have taken an altered form.

Such reflections, however, do not usually attend our ordinary use of this little word. It is rather in the narrow circle of our own personal fortunes that we review contingencies and trace the workings of causes, and imagine other and different results that might have happened, if certain things on which they depended had transpired differently. Especially when misfortunes and troubles have assailed us we are apt to indulge in such retrospects. If we had had more wisdom, or if we had exercised what we did possess, if we had yielded to the advice of some friend, or if we had resisted the persuasion of another, if other people had acted differently, or if some apparently unimportant event had never taken place, we argue that this trial might never have come upon us. Few deaths take place where the surviving friends do not look back with self-reproach or displeasure at something that was done or left undone upon which they lay the blame of their affliction. So in other cases of trouble, the fortune need not have been lost, the friendship need not have been broken, the good name need not have been sullied, the hopes need not have been crushed, if only something else had or had not happened, or if some one had taken a different course. Generally speaking, these regrets are only productive of increased discontent and gloom. They are often greatly exaggerated from the morbid condition of mind which brings them forth; but even where they are well founded, they are not healthful subjects for contemplation. Could we go back far enough, and in imagination open up all the contingencies which might have been, and arrange them to bring about what we consider more favourable results, we should, in our fancy, subvert the whole order of nature. As it is, by drawing in our own minds the very limited pictures which our powers can furnish, we attribute far too great an influence to single causes, and the reality that rushes back upon us, with increased force, is all the harder to bear. Time has closed the record, and we only aggravate our own pain by striving to tear open the pages.

There is, however, one exception to this, one way in which the thought of what might have transpired under other circumstances, is a wholesome and desirable one. It is where the motive is to obtain clearer light to guide the future. Then it is no indulgence in useless complaints or sickly repinings, but a searching investigation into the past, to obtain the lessons it holds for the future. If we have erred through wilfulness or ignorance, if we have acted hastily or foolishly, if we have weakly yielded up our judgment, or obstinately refused to listen to reason, it is well not to shrink from the knowledge. Especially where moral *ifs* are involved; where our misdeeds and neglects have set in motion a train of evils; where, if the outbreak of passion had been curbed, or the lawless desire controlled, or the loving counsel respected, or the inner voice of conscience obeyed, the present time might have been one of honour or happiness, instead of humiliation and distress; in such cases the pain of retrospect is salutary. Yet even these, to be useful, must be combined with energy, hope, and resolution. To dwell morbidly upon our sins is as futile as to dwell morbidly upon our calamities. Only as they are made to give out their earnest lessons for the future are they a safe or wholesome subject of meditation.

It is not the past alone, however, that holds the *ifs* of human life and action; the future is as full of them and as dependent upon them as the past, and often is a far more cheerful and useful field for thought. Many of the issues which are yet to come depend upon our own character, will, and energy. Upon these it is always safe to dwell, and these are by far the most important. Take the possibilities of the youth just setting out in life, how rich and full they are, and yet how many are the contingencies! If he but follow the inner promptings of his conscience, if he but turn a deaf ear to the tempter, and put far from him the allurements of evil, if he but arm himself with firm principles, and obey the dictates of duty and the pleadings of love, what a happy and valuable life may he not, with good reason, look forward to! Many other contingencies are beyond his control, many plaus and hopes may be realised or crushed, property, employment, health, life, friendship, love, may be his if unforeseen circumstances do not interfere. The *ifs* that lie hidden from his view, in the years to come, are only for trust and faith to accept, as they come, one by one; but the great moral *ifs*, which he can guide and direct—the decisions which lie within his own power to make—the balances which, from time to time, he may turn for good or for evil—these are the hinges of destiny, the true factors of life.

Thus may we obtain the key by which the real significance of this little word *if* may be discovered. Not as a discontented murmur of what the past might have brought us, not as a gloomy foreboding of troubles the future may have in store for us, not as a repining reverie on the uncertain vicissitudes of life, but as a means of ordering our conduct, of strengthening the foundations of truth and right living, of avoiding the pitfalls and snares which lead to destruction, of cultivating whatever is pure, and true, and noble, and generous, and lovely in life and in character. This is the one *if*, in all human existence, on which no uncertainty rests, and which will never disappoint the brightest expectations.

FOOT NOTES.

AN ELEPHANT'S GRATITUDE.—The Birmingham Gazette says that among the animals belonging to a menagerie that visited Tenbury recently, is a fine female elephant named "Lizzie." Nearly five years ago this animal, after a hard walk, was allowed to drink a quantity of cold water, the result being that she was seized with severe illness, and her life was all but despaired of. A chemist of Tenbury being called in, by his vigorous efforts and skilful treatment she ultimately recovered. Lizzie had not forgotten her preserver; and when she was walking in procession through Tenbury, recognizing the chemist at the door of his shop, she left the other animals, and going to him affectionately placed her trunk in his hand. In the evening the chemist visited the exhibition, when Lizzie gave him a warm and most gratifying reception. Gently encircling him with her trunk, she held him for some time captive, to the anxiety of the spectators, and was with difficulty induced to let him go.

BUZZERS.—These good-natured people are not so disagreeable as they have the reputation of being, and their disagreeableness would sink to a minimum did those that were afflicted with them know how to get rid of them after a reasonable interval. All that you have to do is to let the buzzer run on at random. It is unnecessary to say anything yourself. Give him rope enough and he will tell you everything—where he has been, what he has done, whom he has seen, and all about it. All that you have to do is to grant an occasional yes or no, and ply a question here and there. He is an indubitable bore, but he must be endured, for in polite society it is not permissible to pick quarrels with people merely because they get us into corners and talk us overmuch.

The buzzer has his reward. It consists in his estimate of himself. It pleases him to think that he knows everybody and that everybody knows him; that his memory is stored with anecdotes and that his tongue is never at a loss for words; that he can accustom himself with a sort of vulgar ease to any society he happens to be in, and that his incomparable cheek knows not what blushing means. A man thus favoured by nature may make the world his home; he would not be "silent upon a peak in Darien." No grandeur, no sublimity would have the power to thrill him. He makes good gabble, and on that account is acceptable at large dinners or small tea parties.

BURLESQUE.

TOO MUCH GRAMMAR.—The peril of employing highly educated young men as clerks was again illustrated recently. A woman stopped at a green grocer's on Woodward avenue and asked:

"Is them lettuce fresh?"

"You mean that lettuce," suggested the clerk, "and it is fresh."

"Then you'd better eat it!" she snapped as she walked on.

The grocer rushed out and asked the clerk what on earth had happened to anger her, and the young man replied:

"Why, nothing, only I corrected her grammar."

"You have turned away one of my best customers. Only yesterday she came in and asked me how I sold those white sugar, and I got an order for a whole barrel. Hang you, sir! but if them customers want grammar they don't expect to find her in a grocery! No, sir, and if you see she again you want to apologize in the most humblerest manner!"

STRICT VEGETARIANISM.—A man wandered down Calhoun street recently, and approaching Frey's grocery store asked of the proprietor:

"You got some greens, don't it?"

"Greens? Yes, sir."

"You got rooting bakers?"

"Rutabages! Yes, sir; how many will you have?"

"Got some little red plates, mit green tops?"

"Red plates with green? Well, no, sir; I suppose you will find them at the china store, up town."

"Don't got no little red plates? guess it was better of you got some; guess you was a liar. Vich you call dese?"

"Those? why those are radishes."

"Red dishes—dot's vat I said. Say, maybe I get some letters of you to-morrow. You got it?"

"Letters! There are no letters here for you; you must inquire at the post-office."

"Ankwire mit the best office for letters! Dose was a fine skeems. I was up town and vent auf a bake shop and vant some buns, und the man said 'Get out, you old bum, or I'll fire you tree de door.'"

"You should have said 'buns.' He!"

"Buns! Dot's vot I said—buns; and den I comes and vant some red dishes, und you dell me to go auf a china store; I vant some letters to eat und you say go mit de best office. I ogspect off I vant some beants you telle me go to de station-house. I tell you vat I do—you can go to de tyfel. Of you vas a nice man, I vant some injins und cowumpers, und plenty dings, but I guess I go to de drug store und buy a brick und beddels rat pizen."

"HAVE you any objects of interest in the vicinity?" the tourist asked the Burlington man. "I have," eagerly replied the other, "but I can't get at it to show it to you. It's a ninety days' note and it's down in the bank now, drawing interest like a horse race or a mustard plaster." The traveller smiled as though an angel had blessed him. But it hadn't.