

Pastor and People.

SNOW-FLAKES.

Through the chilly winter morning,
Through the gloomy veil of mist,
Came the snow-flakes, thickly falling,
Hiding everything they kissed—
Every window-sill and doorstep,
And the stones beneath the feet,
Till a pall of perfect whiteness
Covered all the silent street.

Soon the feet of busy people,
Passing to their daily toil,
Trode the whiteness out and marred it.
With the grimy stain of soil ;
Till the trampled mass presented
But a sad and painful sight—
Painful in its wretched contrast
With the snow of yesternight.

In the chilly winter morning
Came a little soul one day,
Sweet as any mountain daisy
Growing in its bed of clay.
Fair the face that shone above it,
Lithe the limbs that made its prison :
It was fairer than the snow-flakes
Ere the morning sun had risen.

Soon the hasting feet of Passion
Trode the soul that beat it down ;
And a sinful hand defiled it
In the markets of the town ;
Till the face had lost its beauty
And the limbs grow wan and thin,
With the wretchedness that follows
In the deadly track of sin.

Sullied snow is never whitened,
Never can be fair again ;
But there is a purifying
For the sinful souls of men ;
And the print of evil footsteps
In the downward path we trod,
May be blotted out forever,
By the mercy of our God.

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THE CHILDREN'S PULPIT.

EDITED BY M. H. C.

THE BRAVE PELIGNIAN.

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.—Proverbs xvi. 32.

Between two and three hundred years before Jesus Christ came to Bethlehem, and long before that too, there lived in the northern part of what is now Naples, a brave and hardy people called the Pelignians. They dwelt among the mountains that skirt Lake Celano on the east, rearing great herds of cattle, which they drove, from time to time, down into the plains and sold to the people dwelling there in town or country. These Pelignians and their brother Samnites, had fought long wars with Rome, and in one of these they captured the whole Roman army ; but, instead of killing their prisoners, as many nations did in those days, they only set two stakes in the ground, and binding their tops together, made every proud Roman walk under the arch, to show that he was a defeated foe and the slave of his conqueror ; then they let them go free. But, about fifty years before our story begins, the Samnites grew tired of fighting, and agreed to make their peace with Rome. So the Pelignians went back to their cattle-rearing in the mountains.

Among these mountains, towards the southern end of the lake, lay the little town of Nersae, a little town walled all about and made strong, filled with old-fashioned houses and shops, and having a citadel or place of refuge in the centre. The poet Virgil speaks of this town, and tells how its king, Ufens, helped Turnus to fight against his hero, the pious Æneas. But Virgil makes a mistake when he gives it to the Æquians, for an inscription has been found that tells how the ruler and people of Nersae had a medal struck for them by a neighbouring city in honour of their countryman, the brave Pelignian whose story I am going to tell. There was a family living there whose name the Romans called Vibius, but it is likely that they called themselves Uobos. They were of noble descent, but the Roman wars had made them poor, so that in order to live they had to work with their own hands, which is not a bad thing to have to do. Yet, though poor, they were still fair to look upon, independent of spirit, honourable and kind.

The youngest boy in the house of Vibius was called Vibius Accaeus, just as in Alsace and other parts of Europe, the Christian name follows the surname. When he was but a little child, his mother took him into the famous temple in Nersae, where an aged augur or priest, looking upon him,

prophesied that he would become lord of the town, the first man in it. The mother was pleased to think that her son would restore the fallen fortunes of the family, but wondered why the youngest should be chosen for such a purpose rather than the eldest. She told all the members of her household and her friends also, what the augur had said, so that the prophecy soon became common talk in Nersae. As young Accaeus advanced in years, much care was taken with his education, so that he could read the Samnite and Latin tongues, and write them as well. He sought to learn words of wisdom, such as the Samnites used in their daily speech. "Let him who does not know enough to pray to God, take to the sailor's life ;" "One eye is enough for the seller, but the buyer needs a hundred ;" "Great rogues hang little ones ;" "The mountain is not necessary to the mountain, but man is necessary to man." Then he found that sayings like these used by the common people, had been made by great philosophers, who thus gave the experience of long lives of study for the world's good.

His teacher told him one day of a philosopher, who had lived hundreds of years before his time, among the Greeks of southern Italy, where there were so many Greek colonies, that it was called Magna Graecia or Great Greece. This philosopher's name was Pythagoras, and he was reported to have been a very wise man. Like king Solomon he made many proverbs, and these had been translated out of the Greek into the Latin language. Accaeus learned these with ease and pondered over them, and especially over two : "Do not stir the fire with a sword," and "Do not devour your own heart." He wondered what they meant. The last he soon found out. There was a man in Nersae that everybody knew. He looked like a black thunder-cloud. No smile ever sat on his lips, no kind word ever came from them. Some said he was mad, and so in a way he was, but he was one of those men who drive themselves, or allow the evil devil to drive them, to madness. A man had injured him many years before, and he had not been able to be revenged on this man. Vengeance was slumbering in his heart, and he was not going to be happy again until he had done to his enemy as much harm as that enemy had done him or even more. "Poor man," thought Accaeus, "he is devouring his own heart, and losing all the joy of life." So Accaeus bethought himself that it is better to forget wrongs done to one than to make them a continual and a bitter burden. This was one good lesson. Later he went into a smithy and saw the smith put a strong bar of iron into the furnace till it became red hot and so soft that it could be hammered into any shape. "If such is the case with so thick a bar," he thought, "how would it be with the thin blade of a sword ?" He learned that to stir the fire with a sword would be to destroy the sword ; that the great devouring fire of hatred in the world will swallow up our little acts of striking back, and make us part and parcel of the great world of hate. These two hard lessons for human nature he gained and determined that he would try to put them in practice.

Now the king of Nersae at this time was an old and childless man, one Herennius. Had he had a little child, a son or daughter, in his citadel, he might have been better, his heart might have been drawn out to others than himself ; but he had not. He was a tyrant and a suspicious tyrant. The Romans made him pay tribute to them, and he feared lest they might take away his little kingdom and give it to some one of his people. He had heard the prophecy about Accaeus, and made the poor old augur suffer for his prophetic words. Accaeus was now grown up, a young man, handsome, strong and brave. In spite of his learning, he did not despise useful work and manly sports. He had hunted wild beasts among the mountains, herded the cattle, cut down the forest trees, swam in the Atemus, sailed his boat over lake Celano, cheerfully followed the oxen at the plough, and as he did so he thought of the wise words : "Stir not the fire with a sword ;" "devour not your own heart." He had no wish to stir the fire or devour his heart, but gleefully sang the songs of the Pelignian mountaineers as he went about his daily tasks.

One day, returning from his labours into the town, he met the king, Herennius, followed by a retinue. Accaeus stood to one side and doffed his bonnet to the gloomy old monarch, who stopped to look at the young man. Accaeus was moving on, when the voice of the tyrant called him to stop. He did so, and Herennius asked, "Who are you ?" The youth replied : "I am the unworthy Accaeus of your majesty's servants, the family of Vibius." "Aha !" answered the king, "so it is you who are to be king of Nersae, is it ? Take that, you dog." And, with these words, he raised his staff and struck his victim full across the face. It was a cruel blow, and, had Accaeus been weaker than he was, would have felled him to the ground. He stood, however, his face all livid save where the broad red scar crossed it. Accaeus knew that the king had no real power, that the Romans would not allow him to treat his people thus, that he could raise a hundred fighting men in a few hours who would put the tyrant down. One hand was on the pike he used as a staff ; the other on the darts or javelins that all the Samnites carried in their belts, lest they should meet a robber or a beast of prey. But the wound on his face was not so deep as the words in his heart. "Stir not the fire with a sword," it said. Here was the opportunity he had looked for, so he withdrew his hand from the javelins, once more lifted his bonnet to the king, and in silence passed away. That night the old king devoured his own

heart. He knew that his people were revengeful—that they were taught to be such from their infancy—and he did not know how soon, or in what way, Accaeus, and all the house of Vibius, would repay the insult and the injury.

Accaeus did not devour his heart, although his friends tried to make him do so. Herennius sent him money in the morning to make amends for his hasty and cruel deed, but his victim would not accept it. Without a word of reproach he sent it back, saying : "Accaeus does not sell his honour ; when he forgives, he forgives freely." The old king wondered at this, but was glad to think that he had been forgiven, and that the house of Vibius intended no evil against him. Young men met Accaeus in the street—men whose heads his strong hands could have knocked together—and taunted him with being a coward. Young women asked him whose slave he had been, to be beaten and go about with a mark of shame on his face. He bore it all, and answered them never a word. "The honour of an old family is at stake," said his brothers and relations. He replied that revenge and hatred are never honourable, for savages and wild beasts excel most in these. Though tempted much to devour his own heart, he resisted and went on his cheerful, kindly way, doing what good he could in the world.

There came a time of great disturbance in Italy. The Carthaginians, landing in Spain, marched northwards across the Pyrenees, then through southern Gaul and over the Alps into Italy. They beat the Roman armies one after another, until terror was struck to the very heart of Rome. The Carthaginian soldiers, the fierce Numidian cavalry, the wild Spaniards, and, above all, the elephants that accompanied them, filled the Italians with dread ; and, many tribes, as Hannibal and his generals marched southwards, opened the gates of their cities to him and swore enmity to their masters, the Romans. Then the Romans, in their dire distress, sent to all their allies, begging them to come to their help and fight the invader. They even armed the slaves, and promised them their liberty if they conquered the enemies of Rome.

The Pelignians and their allies were safe among the mountains when Hannibal and his great army passed into the south of Italy along the roads that skirt the Adriatic Sea, ravaging the beautiful country as they passed through. So great was their waste of the good things nature and man's labour had provided that the soldiers are said to have bathed their very horses in wine. Returning in their steps, the Carthaginians took the Roman arsenal and fortified camp at Cannae, when great booty fell into their hands. Now, the Roman Consuls at this time were Varro and Æmilius, brave men and good generals as well as the twin heads of the Roman Republic. When they heard of this disaster, they went straight to Cannae to take it back ; but soon the Carthaginians surrounded them. Bravely fighting, the Consul Æmilius fell, and, with him, a hundred and fifty noblemen, three thousand knights, and forty thousand foot soldiers, while Varro, with seventy knights only, escaped to a city called Venusia. From thence he made his way to Rome to tell the terrible story. What remained of the Senate—for eighty Senators had fallen in that disastrous battle—and the people came forth to meet him, and, instead of putting him to death as the Carthaginians would have treated one of their generals bringing such a tale, they thanked the Consuls that he had not despaired of the Republic.

Soon after this a Samnite chief who had joined Hannibal came to the Pelignian valleys with news of the great victory. "There is no hope for Rome," he cried ; "we shall be free once more. Capua has opened its gates to the conqueror, and all the south of Italy is on his side. Cities, like Averrae and Casilinum, that will not submit, he besieges and takes by storm. Shake off the Roman yoke, or the fierce Africans will be upon you and great will be the slaughter." Old Herennius was there at the Pelignian Council when these words were uttered, and the younger kinglets, as they called themselves, being lords of towns or districts, cried : "What says Herennius ?" Now, Herennius was a tyrant—suspicious, unjust and cruel—but he was no coward, and, as we have seen, he could appreciate a good deed when it touched him closely. He folded his arms and replied : "Elephants may travel on the well-beaten roads, and shake the level fields and meadows with their tread, but a single day will be enough in which to make such barriers as will keep them out of our valleys. Our thousands of horned cattle, well dog herded, will drive the Numidian horse into the lake when it is their time to go to water. There are rocks enough on our hills to crush their footmen, be they millions instead of thousands, into nothingness. When we were weak and the Roman strong we made a treaty of peace and friendship. Now that Rome is weak it is not in the Pelignian heart to let her stand alone against those who, perchance, may be, if left alone, worse masters to us than the Roman Senate has been. Brethren, have I spoken ?" The Council applauded the words of the savage but faithful old warrior ; then cried : "Thou hast spoken, O Herennius ?" So Herennius turned him to Hannibal's envoy and thus addressed him : "Go back, Dasius, to your friend, the ravager of Italy's fair fields, to the slayer of our friends and allies, and let him know that in all Pelignia there is no false man, no traitor to his oath, but that, before he has time to think, his plundering niggers will meet our mountain men in deadly fight." With a pale face the traitor Dasius turned up a quiver and scattered its arrows on the ground, took out a dagger and flung it point downwards into the earth among them ; then strode away back to the Carthaginian quarters.

(To be continued.)