

aided the approach of the milk cart on runners, bumping along the rude road that passed the widow's cottage.

"Good-day, Mother Jourret!" shouted the driver, from the depths of many bearskins and mufflers. "And how go the little lads?"

"They have gone into town to take the linen of Madame Foret," the woman answered in the harsh, unmodulated voice characteristic of her kind and class.

Then she came from the doorstep saying anxiously:

"The ice on the river is breaking. Pierre Courneau. Are the little lads in danger?"

The poor eyes contracted nervously and the gaping lips gaped yet further apart as she asked the appealing question.

"But no!" responded the man with reassuring cheerfulness. "The wagon road is safe enough."

"Little Jean can be trusted," his voice came back above the bumping runners and the clattering tires.

"Little Jean can be trusted," repeated the man, nodding her head contentedly over the reflection.

"He is a brave lad, steady and honest like his father, and so sensible for his nine years," she mused. "He knows the danger of the river as well as I. And he always obeys. Ah, yes, Little Jean can be trusted."

She went inside and closed the door, thinking always of the children.

"Perhaps I did wrong to let the little Jules go. He is delicate and coughs continually, but he coaxed so prettily and was so proud to ride on his new sled. How he laughed—do the heart good—when Jean galloped away with him!"

As the poor woman pondered thus the first ominous report was repeated and the fears of the mother returned.

"Jean is after all but a child," she muttered. "The river is tempting and Jules might tease."

She went again to the door step and looked out across the snow fields to the distant river.

Her sight was feeble and the glare from the sky was fading, but she could still see, between the convent trees, the frozen bend gleaming, motionless.

"Jean can be trusted," she said again and came back to the warmth of the kitchen.

For some moments she busied herself tidying the place, putting aside here a child's plaything, there a boy's game, and gazing with the while with the affected ill-humor of mothers who like to assume the anger they are far from feeling.

The mother picked up a child's apron and shook out the folds with a grunt "Look at that! Who would say that it was clean only this very morning! Shame upon that Jules always poking about on hands and knees like a great baby!"

And though the mother spoke so fiercely and looked so black, she hung the little garment on its nail with many a loving stroke and pat.

The next object to arrest her eye was a book lying face downward upon the table.

Like the poor and ignorant, to whom reading is a mystery and all knowledge sacred, she reverently lifted the book and turned the leaves with careful fingers, nodding her head at a straining, her distorted lips into a foolish smile of wonder, respect, and pride.

"Tens! Tens!" she exclaimed, her hoarse voice breaking into a chuckle of delight. "But the good Cure means to make a wise man of our Jean since he gives him such learned books to read. Perhaps—who knows?—he will make of him a priest like himself. O Blessed heaven! Our Jean a priest! Think of that! And why not? Jean is a good lad; mischievous sometimes, but wicked, never! And what a heart of gold! Perhaps, Jules, too! But there—one should not ask too much of the good God. Ah, but they are brave lads—both. They will have a dish of sweetened rice for their supper, and I will make them a bit of sucre as a surprise."

"A surprise," she chuckled, as full of eagerness to carry out her little conspiracy before the arrival of the children, she shuffled her crippled body to the hiding place of a treasured lump of maple sugar.

This she broke into a hot pan, adding to it a morsel of butter in place of the rich cream the recipe called for, and a handful of nuts, long hoarded for just such an occasion as this; then when all had properly boiled, she scooped a hole in the snow banked high against the door-jamb and poured the seething mixture in to cool.

While doing this she noticed the storm-clouds gathering, and came into the house, saying fervently:

"Thank God, the little lads are snug in their coats lined thick as wool's hand with wool! And the good shawl I wrapped about Jules' head will keep him warm and dry. There is nothing to fear from the storm. Besides the children have long ago turned into the wagon-road and are now far from the river. They will be here soon."

She laid the supper table with a white cloth and coarse blue crockery, putting at Jean's place the china bowl that had been his father's, but for little Jules, some impulse caused her to turn and lift from the shelf that held the clock, a gaily painted porcelain mug bearing the inscription "For a Good Boy" encircled in a wreath of painted roses.

Then she remembered the sucre, and, going outside to the spot which she had last seen gleaming motionless between the trees was now a confusing streak of black. As she shaded and strained her poor eyes in effort to make the vision clearer, the heaving-storm-clouds lurched, and in a flash of yellow light the mother saw the angry sea flood swirling round the bend.

She shuddered and muttered, "Ah, God! But saying always, "Little Jean can be trusted," she brought the sucre into the house.

With a knife handle she broke the crisp candy into bits, which she arranged on a plate in a clumsy pattern of circles and diamonds, and placed it in the center of the table.

All was ready, but the children did

not come.

"They have stopped to play on the road," the mother said. "Jules is full of pranks, and will perhaps run and hide to torment his brother, and Jean will run after him, and between the two naughty ones the poor mother waiting at home is forgotten."

And though the poor woman spoke lightly enough, one could see that she was in truth very uneasy as she moved restlessly about; now glancing at the clock, now peering from the small window fast growing dim. And yet no sign of the little lads.

"Madame Foret has kept them for coffee," the poor woman admitted, as her fears finally assumed a definite shape. "She has done that before. Of course; of course. The good lady makes much of the little lads, and they have stayed to eat sweet cakes, and that, with their frolicking, makes them late. When they come they had best take their breath and get quickly into bed."

She filled the blue china bowl and the little porcelain mug with good lentil soup, and laid the dish of sweetened rice on the table. Then she went to an inner room and brought back two little white nightshirts, which she spread carefully over chair backs and stood up close against the stove to warm.

Very cozy the little kitchen looked in the dusk, with the light from the fire flickering on the white walls, glinting gaily in the blue and gold of the tete-a-tete cup, and throwing warm shadows over the two little shirts stretched across the chairs.

Then the mother went to the doorway and looked out with expectant eyes.

The saffron sky had faded to gloom; upon the white land lay a shadow like the ashen shadow on a dying face, and in the distance—swiftly, silently, relentlessly—passed the river.

Across the snow plain, beaded which rose the pale trees of the convent garden, a figure was swiftly advancing. It was that of a tall, grave man wearing the broad hat and trailing gown of a priest.

But the widow did not see him, for all her senses were concentrated upon a sound that fell like music upon her listening ear.

Throwing up over her head the outer folds of her thick woolen skirt, she ran limpingly down the slippery path until she reached the high banks, between which lay the beaten road. Here she stood, while round the great drift at the bottom burst with shout and laughter a crowd of rollicking boys. Children of the hamlet returning home from play.

The mother's heart gave a joyful leap. She knew now the little lads were coming.

The noisy troop in the road advanced through the gloom in a shadowy mass, while the mother's dim eyes watched to catch the first glimpse of Jules' little startled head; her listening ears were strained to hear about the merry shouts of the others the ringing laugh of Jean.

Alas, poor mother! The man in the priestly gown is close beside her now. But neither presentment nor intuition warns her of his presence.

Her soul is conscious of but one idea—the little lads are coming. A moment more and they will leap into her waiting arms. Safe and sound she will hold them fast to her heart; her precious little lads!

With glowing eyes and lips parted in yearning expectancy; with every line of the poor, rough face softened, beautified, transfigured, the widow Jourret waited.—R. M. Samson in Benziger's Magazine.

learn the full import of our request for evidence, which you thought so easy to comply with.

But suppose those old fourth century manuscript copies and fragments of copies are found not to agree, what then?

Mr. Jones.—"Well, then, they are marked with a 'cave,' until original documents are exhausted for something to support their claim."

But suppose all the known existing copies are found to vary and the originals are non-existent, what then?

Mr. Jones.—"If nothing anywhere can be found to sustain a word or a translation of a word, it is suspected and left out of the bunch."

It is not only a word or many words, but the whole manuscript that is to be sustained. How, in the absence of any known correct copy, can you know which, if any, of the varying copies is a correct reproduction of the original? Among any number of varying copies it is impossible for you to know which of them, or if any of them, is correct, unless you have a known correct copy, as a criterion, rule or measure, with which to compare them. But you must acknowledge that you have no such known correct copy. Consequently all the varying copies are unverifiable; and as long as they are all unverifiable they are all equally erroneous. As all vary from each other all cannot be true, and as you know not which one, if any, is true, they are all to you equally unreliable, not competent witnesses either to the verity or fallacy of each other.

Just here we request you to recall our question. It was this: Where is your evidence that the existing copies, or any of them, are correct copies of non-existing originals? If you have a moment you will see that you have not answered it or got anywhere near it. Instead of producing the evidence demanded to prove and identify any existing correct copy—which you undertook so willingly—you have simply tried to show how a correct text might be constructed by bunching together the variations and errors of existing copies; that is, you would get at the truth by a combination of errors.

Now, even if we were to admit—as we do not—that you could construct a true text in this way, you would still not have complied with our demand for evidence to prove that any existing copy is a correct copy of the originals.

Mr. Jones.—"The quotations from the ancient Fathers are also called in evidence to warrant the accuracy of our manuscripts and true rendering."

As the ancient Fathers did not indicate from what manuscript they quoted, their quotations are not evidence for any particular manuscript among the varying manuscripts.

But you are skating on thin ice when you appeal to the Fathers, for they will leave you in a bad way. If you grant that their quotations prove the correctness of the translation from which they quoted, you must reject your American revised version of the Bible as imperfect. For not only the Fathers, but our Lord and His Apostles, quoted from the Septuagint. Then according to your reasoning the Septuagint is a true copy of the Old Testament. But the Septuagint has in it all those books which the American Revised rejects as apocryphal. Consequently the rejection of these books leaves your American revised imperfect, minus habens.

Again, St. Augustine quoted from the Vetus Itala, yet you say that version was incorrect, and St. Jerome, at the request of Pope Damasus, revised and corrected it in his Vulgate. The Vetus Itala being a translation from the Septuagint had in it from the Septuagint those books which your American Revised version rejects as apocryphal; so, if Augustine's quoting from the Vetus Itala proves that version to be correct it proves at the same time in his authority that the American Revised is erroneous or defective in that it does not contain the apocryphal books.

The Fathers of the Church are not safe witnesses for Protestant to appeal to. They generally give him away badly, as they do you in the present case.

Mr. Jones.—"We should not rely too much on any one version, or on any one manuscript."

Right. But if you cannot rely on any one version or manuscript you cannot rely on all of them taken together, for no number of unreliable versions can give you a reliable one. Truth is not begotten of error. Or, to give an illustration in keeping with the business instincts of the times, you cannot from any number of false dollar bills extract any genuine bill; at least you cannot do it without recourse to practices that are likely to land one in jail. Without a genuine bill as a rule to judge by: you cannot tell either a true or a false bill when you see it.

This is precisely your situation with regard to existing and differing manuscripts, and as you say we must not rely on any one manuscript or version there is none that you can consider as genuine. Hence, the originals being by which to judge of the reliability or genuineness of any existing manuscript or version.

Mr. Jones.—"The Greek manuscript to which you say St. Jerome had access is unknown to you and me. There is no time or place or date given."

Yes, to our great disadvantage it is not known to you and me, but it was known to St. Jerome, one of the Fathers of the Church, whose integrity and scholarship are known to the world, and before, must have used some sort of a chronophore. But granting them the chronophore, how could they have appealed to quotations from the Fathers to prove the correctness of copies and versions. And now when one of those Fathers, one of the most celebrated among them, indicates a preference for a particular manuscript or version by selecting it to translate, you attempt to throw doubt on that manuscript by implying a lack of knowledge or judgment or honesty on the part of that most famous Father of the Church, the most celebrated Scripture scholar of any age.

Mr. Jones.—"But there is no time or place or date given (of Jerome's copy)."

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years after St. Jerome used it, but it does not follow that he did not know the time, place and date, and other information about the copy he used sufficient to determine his selection of it in preference to other extant copies. As to date we know it was older than any manuscript now existing, for he called it old in his time; that is, in the fourth century—1,600 years ago. And no existing manuscript can be traced with any certainty beyond the fourth century.

But if absence of time, place or date destroys the value of the copy used by St. Jerome, it equally destroys the value of all ancient manuscripts now in existence, for the time, place or date of none of them is known.

Mr. Jones.—"We can't classify it (Jerome's copy) with genuine since we have no history of it."

You cannot classify it with genuine or correct manuscripts for the very simple reason that no manuscripts known to be correct exist. The fact that it was selected by St. Jerome is a higher guarantee of its correctness than is possessed by any existing manuscript copy, and if it were in existence to-day it would for that reason take a higher place than any existing copy. Try to produce, if you think you can, a fourth-century witness as authoritative as St. Jerome, to the correctness of any manuscript extant, any witness who gives so positive and direct testimony as St. Jerome gave to his manuscript by selecting it to translate, from among the many manuscripts existing in his time. Just try it.

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