

Family Circle.

THE MORAL ALCHEMY.

"In this the art of living lies."—Dr. Cotton.

A group of young people, composing the family of Mr. Mansfield, were one winter's night collected in the drawing room, around the central table, gazing with eager curiosity upon an engraving which that gentleman had just unrolled before them. It presented an antique and spacious apartment, lighted by a single lamp, which seemed to make "darkness visible." The occupant of this gloomy chamber was a spare old man, whose sunken eyes and wrinkled brow bespoke a life of mental labor. He was represented to be busily engaged with some occupation, the object of which fairly puzzled the younger children, and the heterogeneous articles which surrounded him did not tend to elucidate the mystery.

"This is an alchemist in his laboratory, making experiments in order to discover the Philosopher's Stone." Horace Mansfield at length observed, addressing his brothers and sisters in a tone expressive of the pride at his superior knowledge. "What an absurd idea!" he added, looking somewhat contemptuously on the figure before him.

"In our enlightened days it does indeed appear so, Horace," his father remarked; "yet persons possessed of learning and ability engaged in the pursuit. It was the mania of the middle ages, and was not confined to men who might be supposed to have leisure for the study, but was even pursued by princes. One of the German Electors, (John Margrave, of Brandenburg) was surnamed the *The Alchemist* of which title he is said to have been more proud than of his electoral dignity." Mr. Mansfield then proceeded to explain to the younger children the motive which had induced the Alchemist to spend his days and nights in deep study and repeated experiments, and lamented that so much valuable time should have been devoted to a fruitless pursuit, whilst that which was really useful, and would have tended to promote the interests of mankind in general, had been left unexplored.

"And yet, papa," exclaimed a thoughtful boy, who had been looking very earnestly on the picture—"and yet if gold could have been made so easily, how much could have been done for the poor?"

"I question, my dear, whether benevolence ever instigated the pursuit," Mr. Mansfield returned. "And had the discovery been made, it is doubtful if the same value would have been set upon this now rare metal. Such things, my children, have no intrinsic worth. The value set on them is purely artificial, on account of their scarcity. Thus you see if what is termed baser metals could be transmuted into gold by a chemical process, that mineral would not be held in the same high esteem at the present."

"Where do you mean to put this pretty picture, papa?" asked a little fair-haired girl, as she climbed to her accustomed seat on her father's knee.

"I intend, my dear, to have it hung up in the school-room," was his reply.

"The school-room! I thought papa, that you did not approve of pictures in the school-room?" chimed in another.

"I do not approve of such as would be likely to distract your attention from your studies; but when I have told you how, in my youth, I learned a lesson from a picture similar to the one before us, I hope you will always think of it when you see this." The children looked up with pleasure and eager glances.

"May I guess what it was papa?" asked Horace with an air of self-importance.

"To be sure you may; but I doubt that you succeed."

"You wish the alchemist's incessant labor and contempt of difficulty to incite us to perseverance in our studies?"

"That would be an excellent moral to draw from the subject, Horace; but that was not the lesson I learned from it."

"Well, then, papa, we must leave it to you to tell us what it was."

"When I was a youth of about your age, Horace," Mr. Mansfield began, "I had conceived a great desire to follow one of the learned professions; not that I had any particular talent for any but I had adopted the erroneous idea that it would increase my importance.—My father had, I know, other views for me. I was his only son, and being engaged in a flourishing line of commerce, he naturally wished me to be associated with him, more especially as he was in delicate health, and had a large family of daughters to educate and provide for. I never thought of disputing my father's authority; yet my obedience was of a description which I now think of with shame, for it was anything but prompt and cheerful. I consequently commenced my new duties with a spirit altogether at variance with their proper fulfillment. As might be expected, I was always unhappy. I considered myself an injured individual, and deemed that my prospects in life were entirely blighted. Whilst my mind was in this desponding and discontented state, a relative of my mother's paid us a visit. He was one of the most delightful specimens of cheerful old age I ever met with.

He had spent a life of activity and usefulness, and was ever ready to sympathize with and

encourage the young in a similar course. He very soon discovered my source of regret; but he did not make any remark until a circumstance occurred that gave him an opportunity of teaching me a lesson.

"I accompanied him on a visit to an exhibition of pictures, where, amongst other gems of art, was an exquisite painting, the subject of which was similar to the engraving we have before us. I was much struck with it, and stood for some considerable time riveted to the spot; then turning with a bitter smile, 'Ah, would,' I murmured, 'that I had been the fortunate discoverer of that stone!' This brief exclamation was not intended to meet the ear of my aged companion; but it did so, and he eagerly inquired whether I desired the same of the discovery, or the unbounded wealth it would produce. 'The wealth, I energetically replied, 'but not for its own sake, for I am not avaricious and, encouraged by his manner, I then proceeded to open my heart to him, by making him acquainted with my severe disappointment. Nothing further passed on the subject until we were on our way home, when, with a good humored smile, the old gentleman addressed me. 'I have my dear young friend,' he said, 'been turning your wish over in my mind; and thinking it unlikely that it will ever be realized, I have hit upon an excellent substitute.' I looked up not a little puzzled to divine his meaning, but made no remark. 'The Philosopher's Stone,' he resumed, 'is, I believe, now generally admitted to have been a mere chimera of the imagination; but it is in your power to effect a transmutation of infinitely more value, and this is no secret science. The experiment may be tried by any one.' 'I really do not understand you, dear sir,' I returned with some anxiety, supposing he was about to make a revelation which would further the objects of my desire. 'Providence has not permitted you to follow the bent of your own inclination,' he resumed, 'you are dissatisfied, and consequently unhappy, thinking like the prophetic Jonah with his gourd, that you 'do well to be angry.' Now, if, instead of brooding over what you deem to be your misfortunes, you were to try, by the magic power of a moral alchemy, to transmute your duties into pleasures, you would, I think, find the result successful. You look surprised and incredulous, my young friend,' he pursued; 'but I can assure you that the thing is practicable, because I have made the experiment myself. When the occupation is simply manual, we may employ our thoughts upon more agreeable and congenial subjects; but when they are necessarily chained down to an uninteresting employment, the very fact of its being a duty, if it be discharged with a cheerful spirit, may invest it with a charm. Will you try this moral power?' he asked, affectionately taking my hand. 'I will—I will indeed, sir!' I exclaimed. 'You have made me thoroughly ashamed of my discontented spirit.' And I did try it, my children, and having experienced its happy effects, recommending you all to make the same experiment for yourselves.

YOUNG MEN WANTED.

They are wanted at all our fashionable saloons. The want is great, and no pains are spared to get them there. A dozen young men are more valued there than ten times that number of any other class. How precious such a prize!

The theatres want young men. They want their presence—their influence—their money—their shouts of approval—glowing accounts, in their various circles, of the "lots of fun" they have enjoyed. Theatres will have young men, if human skill in creating attractions can seduce them there. They are the best victims they can ensnare.

Gaming saloons want young men. They can be drawn into a deeper and deeper interest in the exciting scenes which occur there.—'They have money and they can get more.' They will get it, if they are fairly drawn into the powerful fascinations of gaming, and they will stake it, and they will lose it, and they will go for more, and lose that, and become more and more entranced; and sure victims will those young men become of remorseless villains.—Hence they are wanted.

Scenes of sensual pleasure call loudly for young men. They shall be attracted that way, if the most tempting earthly fascination can prevail. Paintings, and statuary, and music, and pictures, and books, all shall combine to kindle youthful passion, and send men to "her house which is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." They are wanted there.

Yes! young men are wanted at all these various scenes of guilt; wanted for the victims of the designing, the crafty, the vicious.

Are these the only places where they want young men? No. They are wanted at their own homes; homes they might honor, and bless, and make happy. They are wanted by affectionate parents, loving sisters, who pine over their absence and tremble at the thoughts, how many scenes of guilt want them and how many get them. The friends of virtue and piety want young men. They are the strength and beauty of Zion. We cannot spare the young men. Young men are wanted! Shall vice allure them over a crushed conscience, blasted honor, and a lost heaven? Or shall virtue's voice prevail?—*Boston Traveller.*

Geographic and Historic.

JACOB'S WELL AND THE SAMARITANS.

BY HARRIET MARTINEAU.

Our last view of Jerusalem was very fine.—We looked back from a ridge on the northern road, and saw it lying, bright and stately, on its everlasting hills, but it looked lower than from most other points of view, from the Moab Mountains forming its lofty background. We descended the slope before us, and lost sight of the Holy City forever.

Again we were struck with the vivid colouring of the scenery. All this day, the hills were dressed in brilliant hues;—the soil, red, grey and brown, the tilled portions, of the brightest green; and the shadows purple or lilac. All the hills show traces of having been once terraced, and they were still completely so in the neighbourhood of our encampment this evening,—the terraces following the strata of the stone, which all lay slanting. This gives a singular air of wildness to the most cultivated spots.—Here and there were basins among the hills, the red soil dropped all over with fig and olive trees, or full of corn, and the upland tracks winding among slopes all strewn with cistus, iris, cyclamen, and anemones, and bristling with tall flowering hollyhocks. On we went, past deep old wells yawning in the hollows, or stone cisterns, few camels here and there, browsing in the dells, past groups of Arabs with their asses, carrying corn to the city; past stone vilages crowning the steep, till, at 6 P. M., we encamped beside a beautiful old pool. We were under the shelter of a rock whose moist crevices were fringed with delicate ferns. While dinner was preparing, I went back on our road—the narrow, stony road, which wound round the verdant promontory opposite to our rock—to find a honeysuckle which I had seen climbing and blossoming to a great height, and I brought back a charming handful of flowers.

While we were at dinner in the tent, a sound of scuffling was heard outside; and when our dragoman next entered, he was out of breath. We afterwards heard the whole story, and were amused to find how zealous our Mahomedan servants could be in the cause of Christians.—Some Arabs, with their loaded mules, had come with the intention of encamping beside the pool, and, on finding the ground partly occupied, though there was plenty of room left, they became abusive, and wondered aloud what business these cursed Christians had in their country. Our dragoman resented this, and threw the speaker down over the tent ropes. There was then a stout scuffle, and our cook coming over the tent-pegs in the dark, they had the worst of it, and went off vowing vengeance.—We heard no more of them however.

The next morning we saw the Mediterranean, like a basin of deep blue water between two hills. We were not going towards it, however, but to Nablous, the ancient Sychar; where lies that Jacob's well at which the woman of Samaria was wont to draw water.

Our road lay through a most fertile valley now called Hawarrah, where the crops were splendid for miles, and the villages were thickly planted on the hills. The ground rose in a series of table lands, of which there was a succession of three, when we were leaving the Hawarrah valley. The roads in this part of the Holy Land were mere lanes full of stones between walls, or tracks through olive grounds and meadows, or paths running along shelves of the rocks, with a bit of rocky staircase at each end, about ascending or descending which our good horses made no difficulty.

Before entering the valley where old Sychar lay, between the mountains Ebal and Gerizim, we came to the fine fertile parcel of ground which Jacob bought. The valley opens out into this wide basin; and near the junction of the valley and the basin is the old well which is the supposed scene of the conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. Some of our party wound round the base of the hill to the well, and some (and I for one) rode by the upper path, over the shoulder of the hill, and came down on the other side. I had thus a fine view of the whole locality; of the valley where the city lies—a narrow valley, rich with fig and olive groves, and overhung by the rocky basis of Ebal and Gerizim, where the square black entrance of tombs dotted the strata of the rocks. From this height, Jacob's land looked a beautiful expanse. The well is a mere rough heap of stones, with a hole in the middle, nearly closed up. What there is below ground, I cannot say; but this is all that is to be seen on the surface. It is not a well likely to be in use now, for there are many springs and shallow cisterns (though no well) between this and the town, which lies about a mile and a half off.

Every body knows that the Jews had no friendly dealings with the Samaritans in the time of Jesus. The quarrels had then lasted above 500 years. How many sons had gone down upon their wrath! The Samaritans had wished to assist the Jews in rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem; but the Jews hated them as a mixed race, and would not admit that they had any right to share in temple worship, or any other Jewish privileges. It really was a serious objection to the Samaritans, that they were of a mixed race; not only because the Jews believed that they held the promises on the very

ground of the purity of their race, but because the intermarriages of the former Samaritan Israelites with the Assyrians and others disposed them to idolatry, or at least to a worship mixed as their race. So the Samaritans were excluded from the rebuilding of the temple, above 500 years B. C. And not being permitted to help, they did all they could to hinder.

About one hundred years after, they obtained leave from the Persian court (to which both the Jews and they were subject) to build a second temple to Jehovah, and they built it on Mount Gerizim. This was a shocking impiety in the sight of the Jews; and it was the occasion of a number of lay-minded Jews, who had broken the law, by marrying heathen wives, or otherwise, and who yet wished to worship Jehovah in the temple, resorting to Sychar, to join the Samaritans, and render their race yet more mixed. This was the quarrel which the woman of Samaria referred to when she spoke of the question, whether "men ought to worship in this mountain or in Jerusalem?" and thus is explained her wonder that Jesus being a Jew, should ask water of her who was a Samaritan. There was also a quarrel about their Scriptures; the Jews insisting to this day, that the Samaritans had altered two or three texts, relating to these two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, in their own sacred copy of the books Moses; the Samaritans insisting, of course, that theirs was the true copy.

From my early youth, I had always taken a strong interest in this old quarrel, feeling sympathy with both parties, and keen delight in the wise and soothing words of Jesus concerning it. What a truth it was for both parties to hear, that God was now to be worshiped everywhere; and that all places were henceforth to be as sacred as the Jerusalem temple, or the mount of Sychar! And what a lesson in liberality it was to the Jews when he gave honor to the Samaritan in the parable, on account of his good works, above the sacred priest and the servants of the temple at Jerusalem. Both parties were of course, wrong in their fierce anger; but each had much to plead on his own side. The Jews were bound to keep their own race and worship pure, and held, as an essential matter of faith, that Jehovah would have but one dwelling place; which was their view of the temple. And the Samaritans were surely right in persisting in favor to worship Jehovah, in accordance with the laws of Moses, as they did not believe in strange gods; and if the Jews could not admit them to worship in the temple at Jerusalem, they could not be blamed for building one for themselves.

TO BE CONTINUED.

FISHING CORMORANTS.

Some of the inhabitants of Nantah have an ingenious way of earning their livelihood by training cormorants to dive into the river, and bring up fish from the bottom. Generally, about the time of low water, a boatman might be seen near the arches of the bridge, with four or five cormorants perched on a boat. At a given signal from the owner, one of these birds bounded from the boat into the stream, and, after looking about for a few moments, dived to the bottom, becoming invisible sometimes for two minutes, when it generally rose, at forty or fifty yards distance, to breathe the air. After another minute, the bird again descended into the stream, and repeated the process till it brought a fish to the surface, struggling in its beak.—This was a signal to the boatman to paddle his boat to the spot, where he cast a net into the river, and hauled both bird and fish into the boat. The bird, conscious of its desert, flapped its wings, and by various odd motions, sought the usual reward of a piece of fish, or other food, for its success. Sometimes two cormorants were fishing at the same time, and were often for many minutes apparently lost. The fisherman, however, easily followed them, his little boat consisting merely of half a dozen bamboo poles, which formed a light raft, sufficient for himself and the birds, and was easily paddled with a single oar. During the time in which I watched their operations, they caught three or four fish, one of which was more than the captor could manage, and weighed down its bill below the stream as it floated towards the raft. It is said that a ring placed round the lower portion of the throat of these fishing cormorants, disables them from swallowing their prey before the boatman arrives to the rescue.—*Rev. G. Smith's Consular Cities of China.*

HINDOO WIDOWS.

On the death of the husband, the poor widow is left in the most abject state; she is thrown from her former station, and has to undergo the greatest privations. No widow can marry again; it would be thought the deepest disgrace that could befall her; she would be outcast.—As a widow, she is doomed to all sorts of indignity, the name of widow being a reproach. All her fine clothing is taken from her; she is stripped of every ornament, which she never can again wear; her beautiful hair is frequently shaved off, and she then becomes a slave in the house where she formerly was mistress. Thus it is that the *suttee* becomes a willing sacrifice; for the high-caste and spirited girl cannot brook the shame and reproach which should she continue to live, would be heaped upon her head.