

OUR LIFE-TIME.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

WHEN the world was created, and all creatures assembled to have their life-time appointed, the ass advanced first, and asked how long he would have to live.

"Thirty years," replied Nature; "will that be agreeable to thee?"

"Alas!" answered the ass, "it is a long while! Remember what a wearisome existence mine will be; from morning until night I shall have to bear heavy burdens, dragging corn-sacks to the mill, that others may eat bread, while I shall have no encouragement, nor be refreshed with anything but blows and kicks. Give me but a portion of that time, I pray thee."

Nature was moved with compassion, and presented him with but eighteen years. The ass went away comforted, and the dog came forward.

"How long dost thou require to live?" asked Nature; "thirty years were too many for the ass, but will you be contented with them?"

"Is it thy will that I should?" replied the dog. "Think how much I shall have to run about; my feet will not last so long a time; and when I shall have lost my voice for barking, and my teeth for biting, what else shall I be fit for but to lie in a corner and growl?"

Nature thought he was right, and gave him twelve years. The ape then approached.

"Thou wilt, doubtless, willingly live the thirty years," said Nature. "Thou wilt not have to labor as the ass and the dog. Life will be pleasant to thee."

"O no!" cried he; "so it may seem to others, but it will not be. Should puddings ever rain down, I shall have no spoon! I shall play merry tricks, and excite laughter by my grimaces, and then be rewarded with a sour apple. How often sorrow lies concealed behind a jest. I shall not be able to endure for thirty years."

Nature was gracious, and he received but ten.

At last came man, healthy and strong, and asked the number of his days.

"Will thirty years content thee?"

"How short a time!" exclaimed man. "When I shall have built my house and kindled a fire on my own hearth,—when the trees I shall have planted are about to bloom and bear fruit,—when life with me will seem most desirable, I shall die! O, Nature, grant me a longer period!"

"Thou shalt have the eighteen years of the ass, besides."

"That is not yet enough," replied man.

"Take, likewise, the twelve years of the dog."

"It is not yet sufficient," reiterated man; "give me more."

"I give thee, then, the ten years of the ape; in vain wilt thou crave more."

"Man departed unsatisfied."

Thus man lives seventy years. The first thirty are his human years, and pass swiftly by. He is then healthy and happy; he labors cheerfully, and rejoices in his existence. The eighteen years of the ass come next, and burden upon burden is heaped upon him; he carries the corn that is to feed others; blows and kicks are the wages of his faithful service. The twelve years of the dog follow, and he loses his teeth, and lies in a corner and growls. When these are gone, the ape's ten years form the conclusion. Then man, weak and silly, becomes the sport of children.

OF THE DAY.

The *Civil Day* begins at midnight, and ends the following midnight.

The *Nautical or Sea Day* begins at noon, 12 hours before the civil day, and ends the following noon.

The *Astronomical Day* begins at noon, 12 hours after the civil day and 24 hours after the sea day, and is divided into 24 hours, numbered in numeral succession from 1 to 24 beginning at noon and ending at next noon.