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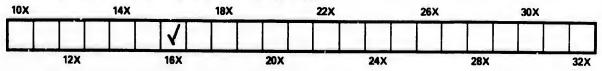
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MORNING

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PRIZE ESSAY

University Coll., Goronto,

1884

BY D. J. MACMURCHY

"ὦ διος αἰθήρ καὶ ταχὐπτεροι πνοαὶ, * * * * * * παμμῆτὸρ τε γη, καὶ τὸν πανόπτην κύκλον ἡλίου καλῶ.

-Æschylus Prom. Vinct.

IN THE CITY

It is a cheerless morning as we step out upon the damp pavement. The air is sharp and piercing, and the uncertain light that begins to glimmer seems rather to increase the gloom of the scene. The houses are grotesquely large; the sidewalks are bare, and look half expectant of the great human tide that will flow back over them with the return of day. The streets are noiseless and empty. Even the darkness, as if reluctant to leave, lingers yet in shady corners and down dark alleys. Out on the broad street the perspective of the long lines of houses is harder than ever. The street corners never seemed so mathematical, the church spires never so fantastic. As we pass along and look up at the windows, here and there a drawn blind betrays the sleeper within, while down below articles exposed for sale and left over night look odd and out of

place. Next we reach a cross street, and expect to see some living being. Not a soul is stirring, and the long street ends only in a dim mist, that suggests, miles and miles away, the country-the home of the green fields and the summer clover, where nature rules alone, and all is innocence, and purity and hope. Dreaming, however, of them brings the fields no nearer. As we wander on we see for miles around us acres and acres of the roofs and chimney tops of the great city. You would almost fancy that the whole population had fled during the night, till a stray beam of light falling upon the pavement attracts our attention, and, looking up, we see that the dim ray of a lamp has struggled out through a closed shutter, only to die in the first light of day. Perhaps, too, with that same dim ray struggles out the muttered, long-forgotten prayer of a dying man. For within, the other rays of the low-burning lamp fall across the feverish face of the sufferer, who welcomes the morning but to wish it gone, and only sees the day decline to long for it back again. As the first light steals in on him, his thoughts wander away back to the old home and the little room where long ago he used to lie and watch the same bright sunbeams glisten and glance on the little square window-panes, while outside, high overhead, the birds were praising Him who sends the sunlight. Life was very fair then, but now repentance seems a mockery, and hope comes too late. Leaving the light and the reflections

IN THE CITY

it awakens, we pass on. A stealthy breeze comes up the street behind us, making the shop signs swing and creak till they look ashamed of their own faces, and sending a rabble of last year's leaves with their bad city acquaintances -scraps of dirty paper-scampering across the roadway. A little farther on, down at the end of a lane, shines a gas lamp, looking dismal in the increasing light. Led by curiosity we pass in and disturb what seems a bundle of rags, but what is in reality a human being that want has forced into the streets, and Christian charity and the police have left there. As your eyes become more used to the light, or rather the darkness of the place, you see that the poor wretch you have disturbed is not alone, for he also has companions, to whom some quiet corner affords a scanty Alas, that brick and stone should be less hardshelter. hearted than flesh and blood! Some are asleep-never to wake again. Others are asleep, but they will wake again, perhaps, on many another morning of misery like But they are far away now from their troubles, far this. away in the fields, in the woods where they once used to stroll. Some are in gorgeous palaces attended by smiling courtiers; some in golden climes raising the precious sand in their hands : all are forgetful of what is passing round them. Thank God ! the poor are as happy in their dreams as the rich, and often more so! Retracing our steps, we pass out under the archway, on up the street. There is

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more light, and things look more natural. Round the corner in front of us comes the first cart with a sharp turn, and goes rattling away up the street. The sun is coming up fast now; it tips the cathedral's spire and pinnacles with a dazzling edge; a minute more it peeps over the gables and looks you full in the face. The broad day has come at last, and down through palace dome and rotten roof, through costly colored glass and shattered window, it sheds its equal ray.

IN THE COUNTRY

There is no wind. Even nature herself is in suspense as we pass out through the little wicket gate and go on up the pathway over the hill. The air is fresh, and, with the first faint signs of the coming day, grows colder. The few remaining stars never looked so far away. Far in front the first dull hue—the death of night rather than the birth of day—glimmers faintly in the sky. Soon this indistinct light gives way to brighter colors that foretell the advent of day. Higher and higher it shoots into the pale vault, till the sun—the bright sun that brings back not light alone, but new life and hope and gladness to man—bursts forth over the expectant earth in clear and radiant glory. God made the country. No one could doubt it, as in the green grass on every hand sparkle thousands of gems. The

IN THE COUNTRY

daisies turn their lovely dew-dipped faces to greet the Objects which looked grim and terrible in the darklight. ness grow more and more defined, and gradually resolve themselves into familiar shapes. The haystacks, even the barns look picturesque, as the first sunbeams, leaping from one tree-top to another, fall aslant their moss-grown gables, and down their weather-beaten sides. Over on the hill vonder the little country church that nestles among the trees has not been forgotten, for these first beams look in at the odd, old-fashioned windows, and throw great golden bars of light into the pews below. Still, 'hough these sunbeams love the little old steady-going church, with its ivy-covered walls and simple worshippers, they love far better to peep in through the churchyard gate, with its unsteady hinges, and look at the graves which lie thick in the shadow of its walls. These early beams never trouble the old hinges, for they come in right over the top of the gate, and stoop ever so gently to kiss the grass that is green on every mossy grave They remember the one that has lain there forgotten for a century, and they have done so every morning during all these long years. They stoop in pity over the mound that was not there yesterday, and lift the drooping flowers that have been placed there last night. Soon, however, the new grave will be as green as the rest; soon it will miss the gathered flowers and the daily visit, but the gentle sunlight will come back again every morning just the same.

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Through the weather-beaten palings of the old fence the great heads of clover look in awe at their more patrician neighbors the roses. But the roses too must die with the clover. On down the road we pass, till in the meadow we cross the bridge with its noisy stream. The well-worn planks show that many have passed before us, on up perhaps to the churchyard on the hill, or to the wicked city many a long mile past it. As we stand gazing into the stream the maples glance over our shoulder at their images reflected in the water, and their leaves tremble as they fancy that perhaps some day they may stoop too far and fall headlong into the water. Out on the meadow the sheep are grazing as if the sun had been up for hours. Right down in front, a little bird rising from his nest amid the long grass, flies straight up-up as if he would reach the very sky. His song is so glad, so pure, so joyous, that you cannot help envying him the voice that sends forth such a hymn of praise. Farther on from the top of the hill we see fields on fields of waving grain, backed in the distance by the green woods, that look so mysterious with their cold blue mist. Here and there a pine, outstripping his fellows, tosses up in the air his sturdy arms. The sky is now full of the morning's glory. We can hardly fancy, as we look round on the smiling earth, that lust, and vice and wickedness, could ever come to mar such loveliness as this.

