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THE INSTRUCTOR.

No. VII.]

MONTREAL, JUNE 10, 1835.

[PRICE 2D.

LITERARY DEPARTMENT.



THE WIDOW AND HER SON.

During my residence in the country I used frequently to attend at the old village church. Its shadowy aisles, its mouldering monuments and its dark oaken panneling, all reverend with the gloom of departed years, seem to fit it for the haunt of solemn meditation. A Sunday, too, in the country, is so holy in its repose; such a pensive quiet reigns over the face of nature, that every restless passion is charmed

down, and we feel all the natural religion of the soul gently springing within us.

“Sweet day, so pure, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky.”

I cannot lay claim to the merit of being a devout man: but there are feelings that visit me in a country church, and the beautiful serenity of nature, which I experience no where else; and if not a more religious, I think I am

a better man on Sunday, than on any other day of the seven.

But in this church I felt myself continually thrown back upon the world by the pomp of the worms around me. The only being that seemed thoroughly to feel the humble and prostrate piety of a true Christian, was a poor decrepid old woman, bending under the weight of years and infirmities. She bore the traces of something better than abject poverty. The lingerings of decent pride were visible in her appearance. Her dress, though humble in the extreme, was scrupulously clean. Some trivial respect, too had been awarded her, for she did not take her seat among the village poor, but sat alone on the steps of the altar. She seemed to have survived all love, all friendship, all society, and to have nothing left her but the hopes of heaven. When I saw her feebly rising and bending her aged form in prayer—habitually conning her prayer book, which her palsied hand and failing eyes would not permit her to read, but which she evidently knew by heart—I felt persuaded that the faltering voice of that poor woman arose to heaven far before the responses of the clerk, the swell of the organ or the chanting of the choir.

I am fond of loitering about country churches; and this was so delightfully situated, that it frequently attracted me. It stood on a knoll, round which a small stream made a beautiful bend, and then wound its way through a long reach of soft meadow scenery.

The church was surrounded by yew trees, which seemed almost coeval with itself. Its tall gothic spire shot up lightly from among them, with rooks and crows generally wheeling about it. I was seated here one still sunny morning, watching two labourers who were digging a grave. They had chosen one of the most remote and neglected corners of the church yard, where, from the number of nameless graves around, it would appear that the indigent and friendless were huddled into the earth. I was told that the new made grave was for the only son of a poor widow. While I was meditating on the distinctions of worldly

rank, which extend thus down into the very dust, the toll of the bell announced the approach of the funeral. They were the obsequies of poverty, with which pride had nothing to do. A coffin of the plainest material, without pall or other covering, was borne by some of the villagers. The sexton walked before with an air of cold indifference. There were no mock mourners in the trappings of affected woe, but there was one real mourner who feebly tottered after the corpse. It was the aged mother of the deceased—the poor old woman whom I had seen seated on the steps of the altar. She was supported by an humble friend who was endeavouring to comfort her. A few of the neighboring poor had joined the train, and some of the running children of the village joined hand in hand, now shouting with unthinking mirth, and now pausing to gaze, with childish curiosity, on the grief of the mourner.

I approached the grave. The coffin was placed on the ground. On it were inscribed the name and the age of the deceased—“George Somers, aged 26 years.” The poor mother had been assisted to kneel down at the head of it. Her withered hands were clasped as if in prayer; but I could perceive by a feeble rocking of the body, and a convulsive motion of the lips that she was gazing on the last relics of her son with the yearning of a mother’s heart.

Preparations were made to deposit the coffin in the earth. There was that bustling stir, which breaks so harshly on the feelings of grief and affection; directions given in the cold tones of business; the striking of spades into sand and gravel, which, at the grave of those we love, is of all sounds the most withering. The bustle around seemed to waken the mother from a wretched reverie. She raised her glazed eyes, and looked about with a faint wildness. As the men approached with cords to lower the coffin into the grave, she wrung her hands and broke into an agony of grief. The poor woman who attended her took her by the arm, endeavouring to raise her from the

earth, and to whisper something like consolation: "Nay, now—nay, now—don't take it so sorely to heart." She could only shake her head, and wring her hands, as one not to be comforted.

As they lowered the body into the earth, the creaking of the cords seemed to agonize her, but when on some accidental obstruction, there was a jostling of the coffin, all the tenderness of the mother burst forth; as if any harm could come to him who was far beyond the reach of worldly suffering:

I could see no more—my heart swelled into my throat—my eyes filled with tears—I felt as if I were acting a barbarous part in standing by and gazing idly on this scene of maternal anguish. I wandered to another part of the churchyard, where I remained until the funeral train had dispersed.

When I saw the mother slowly and painfully quitting the grave, leaving behind her the remains of all that was dear to her on earth, and returning to silence and destitution, my heart ached for her: What, thought I, are the distresses of the rich! they have friends to soothe—pleasure to beguile—a world to divert and dissipate their griefs. What are the sorrows of the young! Their growing mind soon close above the wound—their elastic spirits soon rise beneath the pressure—their green and ductile affections soon twine round new objects. But the sorrows of the poor, who have no outward appliances to soothe—the sorrows of the aged, with whom life at best is but a wintry day, and who can look for no after growth of joy—the sorrows of a widow, aged, solitary, destitute, mourning over an only sor the last solace of her years;—these are indeed sorrows which make us feel the impotency of consolation.

It was some time before I left the churchyard. On my way homeward, I met with the woman who had acted as comforter: she was just returning from accompanying the mother to her lonely habitation, and I drew from her some particulars connected with the affecting scene I had witnessed:

(To be continued.)

RELIGIOUS.

DAILY AND EXPERIMENTAL PROOFS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

Do we wish to enumerate the blessings we have received from the mercy of God since the first moment of our existence to the present time? Can we count the stars? Can we number the blessings which we have received even in a single year? How then can we enumerate those which God has heaped upon us in the course, perhaps, of a long life? How many mercies have we received in our infancy which are now forgotten! Nights passed quietly in sweet sleep; food by which our bodies have been refreshed and strengthened? From how many dangers, and unseen, have we been delivered! How often has God provided for our wants, and confounded our unbelief, which considered the relief impossible! In every accident, the eye of God has watched over and preserved us. Every day of our life has increased the sum of God's mercies to us. His goodness is renewed to us as often as the sun begins and ends his daily course, and who can tell how often God has granted him mercies, of which he is still ignorant, and preserved him from perils which he knew not of, and of which he can only be informed in the world to come!

Taking it for granted that it is impossible for any one to calculate the immense series of God's mercies during the course of his life; let us confine ourselves to a single day, and endeavour to sum up the blessings which one day brings with it. Light, air, food, strength to labour, the house we dwell in, the relations on which our happiness depends, the different amusements and varied pleasures of life. Let us not forget the power by which we respire, nor think it a matter of little consequence. On respiration the preservation of our life depends. We respire, at least, twelve times in a minute; then, each minute brings twelve blessings, each of which is so essential that without it we could never receive another. With respiration, God preserves our under-

standing, will, and the several members of our bodies. Let us suppose that in each minute our soul performs only thirty operations, and only reckon, according to the calculations of physicians, 6000 different parts in our bodies, which God every moment supports; and what wonders of preservation do we not discover! For according to this calculation, we receive every minute from God 12 blessings relative to respiration; 30 relative to our understanding and will; and 6000 relative to the different parts of our bodies; consequently, God grants us, each minute, 6042 blessings, which will amount to 362,520 every hour of our life.

May these daily proofs of the providence and goodness of our God make the deepest and most durable impressions upon our hearts, and they certainly will, if our souls be susceptible of gratitude at all. Yes! if we have any adequate sense of the greatness of God's mercy, and our own unworthiness, it is impossible that we should not feel the most lively gratitude to the Preserver of our life.

But, in order to maintain a lively sense of God's benefits in our hearts, let us often endeavour to compute them. The more we employ ourselves thus, the more we shall be disposed to magnify the Lord our God, and the more shall we be delighted in celebrating his praise.

INGRATITUDE.

Ingratitude is a crime so shameful, that there never was a man found who would own himself guilty of it. Ingratitude perverts all the measures of religion and society, by making it dangerous to be charitable and good-natured; however, it is better to expose ourselves to ingratitude than to be wanting to the distressed. He that promotes gratitude pleads the cause both of God and man, for without it we can neither be sociable nor religious. An ungrateful man is a reproach to the creation; an exception from all the visible world; neither the heavens above, nor the earth beneath, affording any thing like him; and, therefore, if he would find his parallel, he

must go to the regions of darkness; for, besides himself, there is nothing but hell that is receiving and never restoring.

TRAVELS.

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATION.

(From Emerson's Letters from the *Ægean*.)

The morning rose pure and beautiful; all sail was set; and we hoped, ere noon, to reach the open sea to the south of Sara. As we were seated at breakfast, a sailor put his head within the door, and saying briefly that it looked squally to the windward, hurried again upon deck. We all followed; one, on coming up, saw a little black cloud on the verge of the horizon towards the south, which was every instant spreading over the sky, and drawing nearer to us — The captain altered his course instantly, preparing to scud before it; and in the mean time ordered all hands aloft to take in sail. But scarcely an instant had elapsed ere the squall was upon us, and all grew black around.

The wind came rushing and crisping over the water, and in a moment the ship was running almost gunwale down, whilst the rain was dashing in torrents on the decks. As quick as thought the foresail was torn from the yards; and as the gusts rushed through the rigging, the sheet and ropes were snapping and cracking with a fearful noise. The crew, however, accustomed to such sudden visitants, were not slow in reefing the necessary sails, trimming the rigging, and bringing back the vessel to her proper course; and in about a quarter of an hour, or even less, the hurricane had all passed by; the sun burst again through the clouds that swept in its impetuous train; the wind sank to its former gentleness, and all was once more at peace, with the exception of the agitated sea, which continued, for the remainder of the day, rough and billowy.

It is the dread of such sudden bourasques as the present, that compels almost every vessel in the Levant to shorten sail at the close of the day; since, in cloudy weather, it would be next to impossible, during the night, to

discern the approach of the tempest in time to prepare for its reception; and, to a ship with all its canvas spread, its effects might prove terrific:—This instance, and others I have witnessed, are thoroughly explanatory of the passage in Kings, where the servant of Elijah describes from the top of Carmel the little cloud ascending from the sea: “And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.” In the meanwhile the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, “and there was a great rain.” I Kings, xviii: 44, 45. In the Mediterranean such scenes are frequent—but, happily, though so dreadfully impetuous, the hurricane is so local in its fury, that its impetuosity will scarcely be perceived at the distance of a very few miles.

The remainder of the morning was spent in repairing the damage sustained by the sails and the cordage, and in overhauling an English brig which passed us on her way to London. About noon, the crew, dividing themselves into messes of four and six each, spread their little tables upon deck, and despatched their frugal dinner of salt fish and biscuit, washing it down with plentiful draughts of wine, which was supplied by a cup-bearer who attended each. Our fare in the cabin consisted solely of fish; perches boiled in excellent soup, and sardellas served with vinegar and oil; whilst a boy, on the conclusion of the repast, brought in a towel, a pewter basin and some soap, and poured water on the hands of each from an antique ewer, whilst we performed this necessary ablution. This is the custom so often and so minutely described by Homer and Virgil:—

“Dant famuli manibus lymphas.”

ÆN. lib. i, v. 701.

“Soft towels for their hands they bring,
And limpid water from the crystal spring.”

WARTON.

This practice seems to have been universal throughout the east. One of the servants of the king of Israel said, “Here is Elisha, the

son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.” 2d Kings, iii. 11.

NATURAL HISTORY.

THE PORCUPINE.

The porcupine has sometimes ignorantly been called the hedge hog, and hence associated in the minds of many with the swinish race. No conception scarcely can be more erroneous. There is not a particle of resemblance either in outward appearance or internal formation; and the only shade of similarity is in the grunting sound of both. The porcupine has no long head and ears; no tusks nor cloven feet with hoofs; but a short head like that of the beaver with two incisive teeth, round and flat ears, and feet armed with nails. It has a short tail, long whiskers and a divided lip like the hare. But its peculiar characteristic, that which distinguishes it from all other animals, with a single exception, is its covering of spine or quills, which are from ten to fourteen inches in length, resembling the barrel of a goose quill, but tapering at both ends and variegated with black and white. When the animal is at rest they incline backward pretty close to the body; but when “stirred up” by the keeper, they are erected and made to rattle like so many dry horns.

The many fables and travellers’ legends respecting the porcupine, as capable of discharging his quills, as a bowman would his arrow, and of wounding his enemies at an immense distance, it is almost needless to say, are altogether imaginary. He sheds his quills occasionally, as other animals do their coats, but this is not done at periodical intervals, neither does he lose a large portion at a time. An iron bar thrust into the cage will cause the “fretful porcupine” to “bristle up” in his own defence, but not a quill will leave its bed. Insert a piece of soft wood, however, and let it come in contact with the quills, and some of them, which are only attached to the skin by a small pellicle, will adhere to the wood. Their common method of defence, when irritated, is

to lie on one side, and when the foe approaches near, to rise suddenly and wound him with the points of the other.

In its wild state this animal is perfectly inoffensive. It never attacks and will elude an aggressor when possible; but if compelled to act on the defensive, it is said not to fear the lion himself, and has been known to force the "mighty monarch" of the forest to retire. This animal is a native of the hottest climates, though it lives and multiplies out of these latitudes. Agricola says, that the species were not conveyed to Europe before the last century. They are found in Spain, but commonly in Italy, especially on the Appenine mountains and in the environs of Rome.

PHRENOLOGY.

FOR THE INSTRUCTOR.

In our former article we showed the distinction between the mind and the brain, proving that the brain was the medium through which the mind manifests itself. We now proceed to answer the objections urged against the science. It is said to lead to fatalism; but the known fact that the brain is the organ of the mind proves to the contrary. The organ of sight is not sight itself—neither is the brain the mind. A little examination and calm reflection will exhibit the wonderful wisdom of the Almighty in the formation of this medium through which the mind acts. It will appear that those evil propensities had once a contrary tendency, and that they were requisite for man's happiness; but, alas! he has fallen from the happy state in which it was intended he should exist; he is no longer in the image of his divine Creator, and "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation." It was necessary that man should have a propensity to combativeness, that he might defend himself from the attacks of savage animals; destructiveness, to destroy food; self-esteem, that he might have a becoming degree of respect for

himself; approbateness, to gain the approbation of his Creator and fellow-creatures; and acquisitiveness, that he might acquire. Those, together with all the others not mentioned, are liable to abuse.

Thus is man "born in sin" and "in the shadow of death." All children are born with the same organ, but in no two are similar combinations to be found. This highly essential difference may be attributed not only to innate principles, but to the character of the parents, and to what the child imbibes from communication with the world. Being naturally inclined to evil, the propensities must be cured by the cultivation of the moral, religious and intellectual faculties—for

"Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclin'd."

As the skull assumes the shape of the brain, and increases on the external surface according as the mind is cultivated, phrenologists are enabled to determine man's character.

In our next we will give the beautiful arrangement of the organs, with illustrations of the utility of the science to mankind.

W.

WISCELLANEOUS.

THE MORNING AIR.

There is something in the morning air that, while it defies the penetration of our proud and shallow philosophy, adds brightness to the blood, freshness to life, and vigour to the whole frame. The freshness of the lip, by the way, is, according to Dr. Marshall Hall, one of the surest marks of health. If you would be well, therefore, if you would have your heart dancing gladly, like the April breeze, and your blood flowing like an April brook, up with "the merry lark," as Shakspeare calls it, which is "the ploughman's clock," to warn him of the dawn; up and breakfast on the morning air, fresh with the odour of the budding flowers, all the fragraney of the maiden spring; up from your nerve destroying down beds, and from the foul pent within your close drawn curtains, and with the sun "walk o'er

the dew of the far eastern hills." Whoever is found in bed after six o'clock, from May day to Michelmas, cannot in any conscience expect to be free from some ailment or other, dependent upon relaxed nerves, stuffed lungs, disordered bile, or impaired digestion.

WOMAN.

To the honour, to the eternal honour of the sex, be it said, that in the path of duty no sacrifice is with them too high or too dear. Nothing is with them impossible, but to shrink from what love, honour, innocence, and religion require. The voice of pleasure or of power may pass by unheeded; but the voice of affliction never. The chamber of the sick, the pillow of the dying, the vigils of the dead, the altars of religion never missed the presence of the sympathies of woman! Timid though she be, and so delicate that the winds of heaven may not too roughly visit her, on such occasions she loses all sense of danger, and assumes a preternatural courage, which knows not and fears not consequences. Then she displays that undaunted spirit which neither courts difficulties nor evades them, that resignation which utters neither murmurs nor regret, and that patience in suffering which seems victorious even over death itself.

AFFECTING ANECDOTE.

An English officer requested me to visit his wife, a very beautiful woman, to whom he was much attached, not only for her own excellent qualities, but as the mother of three beautiful children, all in a state of infancy. On going to his quarters I found her in the last stage of an intermittent fever—a disease which was very prevalent and fatal among our troops: I need not harass your feelings by depicting one of those scenes which one of my profession is so often called on to witness. It was the tenth day of the fever. Her soul was on the wing, and by the same evening she had breathed her last.

Her unfortunate husband, while he felt her loss as the greatest calamity that could have

befallen him, strove to stifle his sufferings as he caressed his lisping babes, who demanded when their mama would return.

With three helpless infants, in the midst of a foreign country, he was under orders to march with his regiment to Spain. Divided between a sense of public and private duty, what could he do? He was advised to apply to Sir John Moore for leave to carry his children to England. His wishes could not be complied with. "Never mind, my dear friend," said the generous Portuguese noble in whose house he was billeted, "cease to grieve, unfortunate Englishman; leave your infants with me; behold my three daughters, they shall each discharge the duties of a mother to one of your infants, and I will be a father to the whole." "So we will, my dear father," cried his daughters. This was too much for Captain —, and he hastened out of the room.

WEALTH.

Riches are the instruments of good and evil according to the disposition of the possessor. A good fortune is an edged tool, which a hundred may get for one that knows how to use it. Humanity, good nature, magnanimity, and a sense of honour, should be the qualifications of the rich; humility and patience, industry and temperance, those of the poor. Wealth is apt to betray a man into arrogance, pride, and luxury; let us, therefore, ever remember, it is a talent given us of God; and as we have nothing but what we receive from him, we should imitate his love to us, by being always ready and willing to communicate his gifts to others.

SLEEP.

Sleep has often been mentioned as the image of death—"So Like it," says Sir Thomas Brown, "that I dare not trust it without my prayers." Their resemblance is indeed striking and apparent; they both, when they seize the body, leave the soul at liberty—and wise is he that remembers of both, that they can be made safe and happy only by virtue.

POETRY.

A CHILD AT PRAYER.

(By the Rev. Robert Turnbull.)

Rehold ! a scene of love,
 And holiness sublime,
 To lift the soul above
 This narrow earthly clime—
 A lovely little child at prayer,
 Her parents standing by,
 Gazing upon their infant fair,
 With deep delighted eye .
 A holy halo fills the place—
 A light divine, a heavenly grace.

Her face's heavenly glow,
 Her dark and pensive eye,
 Her alabaster brow,
 On which black ringlets lie,
 Her little hands up-turn'd to heaven,
 Her body gently bent,
 All mingling like the hues of even,
 With mellow sunbeams blent,
 Give to the scene a magic glow
 Which only happy spirits know.

This is a sight to wake,
 Of past delights the dreams,
 Like music on the lake,
 Or dying sunny gleams ;
 To raise the sigh for beauty flown,
 Which time can ne'er restore,
 To draw the tear for gladness gone,
 For music heard no more ;
 And conjure up a vision grand,
 Of beautiful, but vanished land.

This too should rouse our faith,
 And bear the soul away,
 Above the shadowy earth
 To climes of cloudless day—
 For this is heaven begun in time,
 A prelude of that bliss
 Which, matchless, endless and sublime,
 No tongue can e'er express ;
 A glory from the world above,
 A sunbeam of eternal love.

O well may angels gaze
 Upon the lovely sight,
 And well to heaven may raise
 The song of deep delight ;
 For richer incense ne'er arose
 From Eastern shrines to God,
 And lovelier scene did ne'er repose
 In India's bright abode,
 'This is a triumph of that love
 That shines afar from worlds above !

LORD BYRON'S LINES, FOUND IN HIS BIBLE.

Within this awful volume lies
 The mystery of mysteries.
 O happiest they of human race,
 To whom our God has given grace
 To hear, to read, to fear, to pray.
 To lift the latch, and force the way ;
 But better had they ne'er been born,
 Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.

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ERRATUM.—In the account of the *gannet* in
 our last number, fifth line from the commence-
 ment, for "bill," read wing.