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THE SPIRITUAL PRESENCES AND PROPHETIC CHARACTERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

ISAIAH.

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"Ecstasies of Genius," &c., &c., &c.

IN our former papers we beheld seerdom in action; we have now to contemplate it under what some may conceive the nobler guise of thought. Albeit, so grand were its deeds, so exalted its motives, so heroic its self-denial, and so sublime its entire being and bearing under the former phase of manifestation, that it seems scarcely possible for a higher stage of existence to be attained to by perishing mortality on this nightly shaded and often eclipsed earth. What can transcend the career of an Elijah? Is there anthem or invocation, pæan or prayer, that ever proceeded from human lips which can be said to surpass in its spoken greatness the actual doing and enduring, the positively achieved result, which constituted the life of this prince of the prophets? What invective against idolatry, however eloquently worded, however sound in argument, withering in satire, though its sentences were rolled off as the volleyed thunder and its blows dealt with the brilliancy and force of the lightning's flash, could equal in actual force that sublime scene on Mount Carmel, when the living fire from heaven approved of the lonely prophet's holy and fearless sacrifice, and when he, with the terrible severity of a God-appointed judge, slew the four hundred and fifty misleaders of Israel at Kishon? Or what act of soul-communion with the Infinite, fashioned into the form of an uttered and preserved in the shape of a written prayer, ever approached to that awe-inspiring transaction on Mount Horeb, when the wind, the earthquake, and the fire passed by as the mighty precursors of the still small voice that comforted the saddened seer in his

affliction, and while directing him whom to consecrate as his successor, commissioned him also to anoint a king over Syria and another over Israel? Here was an interaction between man and his Maker, which, whether in itself or its accessories, its manner or its matter, exceeds by all measurable degrees whatever genius has inscribed as a memento of its power, or devotion has left as an evidence of its zeal. And that fiery translation—so joyously anticipated and so triumphantly undergone—what psalm, though it were of David, or what song of triumph, though it were of Miriam, or what descriptive painting of celestial grandeur and glory, though from the pen of an Ezekiel or a St. John, ever equalled that superhuman ascension from a world of suffering and death into the cloudless regions of bliss and immortality?

Let us not, however, undervalue the writers any more than the doers of great things. Thought is a godlike attribute, and while our debt of obligation is inexpressible to those heroic men who fought the good fight by the marvellous deeds of a resistless seerdom, wielding the elemental forces of nature from a plane of action to which philosophy never ascended, and on which science still looks in despair, we would not be sparing of our gratitude to those gifted spirits whose glowing imaginations have framed the pictures, and whose burning words have communicated the glorious annunciations of scriptural prophecy. We speak in rapt admiration of the eloquence of Demosthenes and the sublimity of *Æschylus*, nor are we faint in our praises of the exalted morality of Socrates or the divine philosophy of Plato; but where in the whole compass of classical literature shall we find aught that can approach in real depth and earnestness of thought, in transcendent grandeur of imagery, in sublimity of conception or eloquence of expression, those truly inspired passages in which the prophet bards of Israel, as the appointed spokesmen of their God, announce his judgments or proclaim his mercies to men. How insignificant is the laboured logic of philosophy when compared with the untutored rhetoric of devotion. As well might we compare the gods of Homer, characterised by their human frailties and earthly attributes, with the awful presence of Jehovah, clothed in omniscience as a garment and robed in omnipotence as a vesture.

Till recently, Hebrew literature might be said to want an exponent, for among all the various schools of European criticism not one seems to have directed its attention to this most interesting department of investigation. The older commentators were so overawed by the sacred character of the Bible that they read its pages as if spellbound, their judgment being overwhelmed and paralysed by the very excess, or rather misdirection, of their

reneration; while later writers on the subject were so occupied with philological, antiquarian, and other provinces of inquiry foreign to the merits of the contributors as authors, that, in their anxiety to correct his text, illustrate his meaning, or explain his allusions, they generally forgot to estimate the capacity or direct attention to the genius of the writer. Now, however, men appear to be emerging from the serfdom of the former and the pedantry of the latter state of things, and while profoundly reverencing the sacred volume as a providentially preserved collection of inspired productions of the most gifted minds of a peculiarly devout and specially vocationed people, they are yet not so blinded by this excess of light as to be rendered incapable of attempting to discriminate between the mental endowments of one sweet singer or one eloquent seer and another. And here we would observe that however the native powers of an author may be sublimated and exalted by ecstasy, yet is there, nevertheless, a certain all-pervading character in his writings by which they receive the recognisable stamp of his individuality, and remain distinguishable as his productions.

This, then, leads us to the great question of inspiration as a producing cause of prophetic, poetical, and other writings, sacred and profane; and in the first place, let us define what we conceive to be the difference between talent and genius. The former results from the operation of mental power, manifested in a natural and normal condition of the faculties; the latter is a product of exalted function, making a more or less near approach to ecstatic illumination. Under the first we obtain thought eventuating in logically deduced conclusions, together with imagination resulting in the formation of conceptions obviously immediately compounded of sensuous impressions, combinations, in short, not creations; while under the latter we develop lucid intuition, with its direct perception and lightning-like apprehension of truth, independently of any intervening process of conscious excogitation, together with an action of the imagination so vivid and intense, so evocative and plastic, as to resemble in its effects the evolution of beauty and order from the crude and conflicting elements of chaos by a creative fiat, rather than the laboured construction befitting mere human effort. This constitutes that first stage of the afflatus, or inrushing of the universal spirit, under which man becomes so far its obedient, and therefore, potent, instrument as to be capable of musical, artistic, or literary composition of a character so exalted that all duly susceptible minds are impressed by it with a feeling of power and originality never experienced except from contact with the works of genius. The second and still higher stage of interior illuminations, under which the subject appears to be not

merely pervaded but filled by light and potency from the central mind, of which he becomes then, not so much a detached instrument, as a living, outgrowing, and participant organ, constitutes the prophetic, in which man is not only a gifted human poet but a heavenly-appointed vates, before the penetrating and all-pervasive cognitions of whose divinely-illuminated spirit the barriers of time and space become evanescent, the past and future are resolved into an everlasting now, and the distant is compassed by an ever present here; the mortal is merged in the immortal, the temporal is lost in the eternal, and the human is absorbed in the divine. The man and his Maker are one, and in so far as the unworthy and earthly vessel can become a befitting recipient of this celestial dew, in so far as his stammering tongue and trembling hand can give effective utterance to the glorious visions and profound intuitions that crowd upon his adoring and recipient soul, in so far may we too be privileged to catch these far off and faintly reverberated echoes of omniscient revelation.

Seerdom, like all other vocations, has its degrees, from the vague presentiment of an individual and immediately impending catastrophe up to the prevision of judgments reserved for the ages, and, glorious still, hidden from ungifted eyes by the impenetrable veil of intervening centuries. In this, as in the physical sphere, altitude appears conducive to extent of view, and thus contemplated, the moral exaltation of the Hebrew prophets immeasurably transcends that of all their heathen rivals. An Isaiah chanting his foreboding songs of woe over the suffering, and his preluding anthems of triumph before the victorious Messiah, presents a mental stature beneath which Sibyls and Pythia are dwarfed and Roman soothsayers sink into insignificance. After nearly three millenniums, while receiving the fulfilment of the first part of his wonderful predictions as satisfactory earnest of the truth of the remainder, we have yet to await the realisation of the latter in the same humble and reliant faith as the men of an antecedent epoch. How profoundly recipient of the higher influences of the universal spirit must have been that exalted soul which could be thus made the fitting instrument for such far-stretching annunciations. How beautifully attuned and how delicately constituted that harp, whose strings could thus vibrate in sympathetic unison with the movements of omnipotence, grandly pulsing across the gulf of so dread a period. How true and how pure the mirror which could so clearly reflect those majestic lineaments of "the Coming Man," lost to all others in the shadowy indistinctness of vast and immeasurable distance.

It is in the writings of the Hebrew seers that we obtain the best evidence of the prophetic mission being based upon and, in

a sense, evolved out of the poetic temperament. How sublime the imagery, how beautiful the comparisons, how fervid the eloquence, and how vivid the descriptions of those matchless anthems, in whose "organ tones" this sweet singer of Israel foretells his people of their doom and humanity of its hopes. The surgings as of the Infinite are heard welling up from the profoundest depths in these unequalled compositions. The radiance as of supernal glory and the grandeur as of celestial majesty burst forth in irrepressible manifestation through these angelic chants, whose transcendent language, powerful, appropriate, and eloquent, threatens, nevertheless, to succumb beneath the overwhelming burden of that momentous revelation, which is conveyed in its burning words and rhythmic sentences. Fer-vent in his appeals, terrible in his denunciations, and withering in his invectives, Isaiah wields the mental lightnings of omnipotence, and overawes while he consumes by the exceeding brightness of his prophetic glory. From the murmur of the zephyr to the roar of the tempest, from the dying cadences of the evening breeze to the deafening thunder tones of the tropical tornado, every variation in the scale of sound and sense reverberates from his God-inspired and mystic pages. Well might the angel touch his lips with living fire from the altar, for from none has a message of greater import been pronounced, and by none was language ever wielded with more of the power of the orator or the music of the poet. It would almost seem as if the genius of Israel brightened as its fortunes waned, that the former glowed as the latter faded, the approaching captivity of their bodies sufficing to yet more effectually emancipate the spirit of this wayward though devoted, this erring though faithful people.

Of Palestine's bardic seers Isaiah is beyond question the first. As Elijah transcends all others in the sphere of action, grandly filling up our noblest *beau idéal* of the sacred hero by the magnanimity of his resolves, the dauntless courage of his deeds, the firmness of his endurance, and the sublimity of his end, so does the son of Amos complete our conception of the prophetic author by the grandeur of his theme, the vastitude of his ideas, the commanding vigour of his style, and the momentous importance of his subject. Proclaiming as with the trumpet-voice of an Apocalyptic angel the far off though assuredly predestined termination of the Mosaic dispensation, he chants, in anthems that might have been sung by the morning stars on Creation's natal morn, the equally assured advent of that greater than Moses, the God-commissioned conqueror of death and sin, the heaven sent champion of the oppressed, the victor of evil, the destroyer of Satan; coming first as a lamb, slain in purpose from

the beginning, meek under reproach, passive under suffering, and submissive under indignity, bowing his head unto the death of shame reserved to him as the portal to an everlasting kingdom, yet returning as a lion, and rending his enemies in the fury of his wrath and trampling on his foes in the fierceness of his ire; stern in his demands, unalterable in his decrees, implacable in his vengeance, and resistless in his power, no longer the innocent victim of injustice, but himself the regal judge, before whose dread throne a world is summoned to receive the award of its iniquities and suffer the punishment of its misdeeds. Isaiah has been called the fifth evangelist, but he was more than this, for, while predicting the first, he also foresaw the second Messianic advent, and after mourning over the woes and humiliation of the former in notes of concentrated agony unequalled throughout the entire range of sacred and profane literature for the deep and concentrated intensity of their wail of grief and lamentation, he bounds, as by a superhuman vault, to the full altitude of triumphant rejoicing at a victory, where the battle was for God, and the conquest not that of mortal men over their enemies, but of the influences of Heaven over the forces of Hell. We admire the spirited pæans of classic poets, and are stirred by chivalrous chants of mediæval troubadours, but what is a lyric of Pindar or a song of Roland when compared with the voiced thunder in which this prince of holy penmen proclaims the triumphant arrival of Israel's long expected king, with the rejoicing of his friends, the confusion of his enemies, and the establishment of his empire on the ruins of all antecedent powers, like a new creation worked by a divine fiat from amidst the chaotic elements of a previously dissolved and dismembered world?

Perhaps a few remarks here on the distinction between genius and seerdom may not be wholly misplaced. The former is the result of so much ecstatic exaltation of such a degree of lucidity as may suffice to produce a spontaneous and quasi-automatic activity of the higher faculties of thought or imagination. Under it the orator speaks without effort, the author writes without labour, the artist designs directly, and without a continuously constructive process, from his glowing conceptions, and the musician composes, as the birds chant their anthems, to relieve the fulness of an overflowing spirit. In each is the rapture of inspiration, the delight, unutterable in words, of exercising creative power. On the two former, ideas rush like a torrent and language is supplied as from an exhaustless fountain; they are spoken through, and become great, commanding, sublime, profound, and original, just in proportion to their absorption in the subject and their childlike submission to the dictates of the

spirit. Instruments and agents of a power greater than themselves, their utterances when at this altitude are Pythonic, and their wisdom is oracular. Such, we may venture to pronounce from the internal evidence of his works, was the mental condition of Shakespeare while originating some of the noblest and most rhythmic passages of his immortal dramas. Such, though in a minor degree, was the state of John Milton when the organ tones of "Paradise Lost" rolled from the lips of this Christian Homer on the ears of his filial amanuensis. While of the state of the true artist, who is ever the veritable poet, the *creator* and not the mere copier and reproducer, during the composition of his undying incarnations of the beautiful, we have an account in the experiences of Raphael, that prince of ecstatic painters, who, in designing his best paintings, never thought of the rules of art, and wrought in perfect freedom, untrammelled by a single law that might limit the more than eagle flight of his daring yet never erratic genius. Some subject presented itself to his mind, welling up spontaneously, that is *revealed*, from the profounder depths of the unconscious, that storehouse of the grandly possible, whence the meagre actual is ever birthed, and he simply projected his conception on the canvas. A labour of love, his imperishable works are the offshadowments in which a gifted and glorious mind sought to communicate its fairer visions to others. They are effluences from a spirit suffused with the divinity, outpourings from a fountain fed by celestial springs, transfusions through earthly media of influences in which the angels share, and wherewith the sons of God are made glad. Nor is the musician less a heaven-taught child, to whose listening ears the notes of seraphic harpers float in unutterable sweetness in the evening air, and to whom the echoes of archangelic anthems are borne not faintly on the morning breeze; to whom the spirit of harmony softly whispers in the myriad hum of insect life rejoicing in the sunny splendour of summer fields, or loudly thunders in the voices of the tempest as it rushes on the wings of night over the groaning forest, or swoops like a bird of prey on the devoted argosy, lashing the waters into foam by the sweep of its pinions, and driving billows to the shore like frightened doves to their cot at the approach of the falcon.

Well has it been said that all thought is inspiration. From the child's carol to the poet's anthem, and from the peasant's gossip to the prophet's annunciation, we hear but the several notes of that sublime Æolian which, breathed on by the universal spirit, sends forth those floods of varied harmony that constitute humanity's unresting worship of the ever-present Father. Beyond question all utterances are sacred, and all aspirations are divine. Order, however, is Heaven's first law, and in this, as in

all things else, there are diversities of gift and specialities of endowment, and we must not, therefore, confound the God-sent revelations of ecstatic seerdom with the commonplace babble of everyday life or of passing literature. Nay, if we would be just to the subject or wise to ourselves, we shall not fail to distinguish between even the grandest of these epic or tragic compositions, which men have, as by one consent, agreed to call immortal, but which are nevertheless essentially temporal, and, we may say, earthly in their scope and tendency, and those other and more sacred productions, in which the author, spoken through of God, subordinates beauty to power, and uses the noblest of literary accomplishments but as instrumentalities for the more effectual communication of that portentous message to the ages, whereof he is the heavenly-commissioned herald. The mount whence an Isaiah utters his far-stretching prophecies of Messianic suffering and millennial triumph, presents a vantage ground from whence even the lofty thrones of a Homer and Æschylus, a Dante and Shakespeare, are overlooked and commanded. The mystic fountains whence his floods of unapproachable eloquence well forth, are nearer to the heart of the universe, and send forth a tide richer in divine life and more unmistakably redolent of celestial influences. The stronger pulsing and the deeper movement of which you are so vividly conscious while perusing those sacred compositions, is evidence that they have originated nearer to the centre of being, and have lost less of its holy effluence in transmission than the highest and noblest of profane productions. In the latter the stamp of man is everywhere discernible, in the former the impress of a God is frequently discoverable; the one are merely human, and the other are essentially divine communications. By the first, if duly impressionable, we are cultured, but by the second we are re-created. By the one our intellect is enlightened and sublimated, so that our cognitions are increased, our thoughts rendered more profound, and our conceptions more beautiful; the outworks of the soul are possessed, but its citadel is unsubdued. But by the other our passions are controlled, our affections are purified, our principles are exalted, and, as a consequence, our sentiments are ennobled, our aspirations become more elevated, and our emotions, while profounder in their origin, are grander in their character; hence, if duly susceptible, we undergo moral regeneration, and become renewed and reconstituted, as by the magnetic emanation of a superior nature. We have undergone intersperation with a nobler order of being, and have partaken in some measure of the greatness of its endowments and the sanctity of its feelings.

Of all the prophetic writings extant, the Jewish hold, beyond question, the first rank. The product of a high-caste Caucasian

tribe, they bear throughout that impress of true intellectual power which ever characterises the higher mental emanations of this noble stock. Of Semitic descent, the Israelitish seers possessed in fullest measure and in richest quality the devotional proclivity, which has been from time immemorial a distinctive feature of this specially endowed family. Inheriting the pure and exalted faith of their Abrahamic sires in the unity and spirituality of the Deity, their fiery and consuming zeal was never misdirected to the worship of inferior and unworthy objects. Of Oriental lineage, they were, both from education and mental constitution, prone to illustration rather than demonstration, and whether in the aptitude or grandeur of their figures, in the simplicity of their parables, or the beauty of their apologues, show themselves everywhere the complete masters of analogy. Poets of the highest order, their taste is equal to their power, so that in their grandest flights they are a law unto themselves, never pushing the sublime to the verge of the ridiculous, nor using the beautiful till it merges in the grotesque. Living during a period of national misfortune and degradation, they were the heriocrally exceptional minds of a decadent epoch, and have, by the fragmentary remnant of their unrivalled works, redeemed the character of a whole people from the otherwise well merited opprobrium of barbarous fanaticism united in apparently incongruous but not unexampled alliance with national corruption. Leaders of their own and teachers of succeeding times, their mighty thoughts constitute the cyclopean blocks on which, as an immutable foundation, the temple of humanity's faith has since rested in security amidst the storms of ages. Their holy aspirations impart grandeur to our litanies, their fervent prayers are embodied in our matin anthems, and their orisons are interwoven with the most sacred breathings of our vesper hymns. They stand alone in the history of extant literature a reverend and worshipful brotherhood, sanctified and set apart from the ordinary vanities of commonplace literature, a holy priesthood, devoted to the teaching not so much the minds as the spirits of men.

BUDDHISM.*

No. II.

MR. Cooper, in his "Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce," tells us, from a source on which he relied, that "magical operations are

* *Souvenirs D'un Voyage dans La Tartarie, Le Thibet et La Chine*, par M. Huc, Pretre Missionnaire, pendant les Années, 1844-45-46 ; published by Adrien Leclere et Co., Paris, 1850. *Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce*, in Pigtail and Petticoats, by T. T. Cooper ; published by J. Murray, 1870.

the essence of present Lamanism." M. Huc says—"Medicine is exclusively exercised by the lamas, or Buddhist priests, in Tartary. Since, according to their religion, it is always a *Tchutgour*, or devil, who torments the sick man by his presence, the first thing to be done in their medical treatment is the expulsion of this devil. The lama physician is also the druggist. They do not use minerals; their remedies are always composed of pulverised herbs formed into pills. When the supply of pills fails, the doctor is not disconcerted; he writes on small pieces of paper the name of the remedy, with certain Thibetian characters; then he rolls the papers between his fingers after having wetted it with saliva. The sick man takes these little balls with as much confidence as if they were veritable pills. Whether you swallow the name of the remedy or the remedy itself, say the Tartars, the results are absolutely similar.

"After the medical treatment employed to facilitate the expulsion of the demon, the lama orders prayers to be offered up in conformity to the quality of the demon who is to be dislodged. If the sick person is poor, the *Tchutgour* is evidently a small one, and in consequence the prayers are short. But if he is rich, if he is the possessor of large flocks, the affair is different. The first thing to be done is, that the sick man should at once perceive that the demon who has caused the disease is a powerful and terrible demon, that he is one of the chiefs of the class; and since it is not decent that a great demon should travel like a little *Tchutgour*, he must have some handsome clothes prepared for him, an elegant hat, a good pair of boots, and, above all, a young and vigorous horse. If all these are not forthcoming, it is quite certain the demon will not depart, so, in that case, remedies and prayers would be thrown away. It may even happen that one horse is not sufficient, for the demon is sometimes so elevated in rank that he is attended by a suite of servants and courtesans; then the number of horses exacted by the lama is unlimited; all depends upon the property of the sick person.

"When all is prepared the ceremony commences. Several lamas are invited from the neighbouring lamaseries, and prayers are continued for eight or even fifteen days, until, in fact, the lamas perceive that the demon has departed, or that it is time for them to depart. If, however, the sick man dies, it is then a certain proof that the prayers have been well recited, and that the demon has really been put to flight: it is quite true that the sick man is dead, but he will be certainly no loser on that account, for assuredly he will transmigrate into a more happy condition than that which he has quitted."

M. Huc visited a Mogul family in order to initiate himself into the language and manners of the people. "One day the

old aunt of the chief or head of the family was taken with intermittent fever. I would certainly call in the doctor lama, said the chief, named *Pokoura*, but if he tells me that there is a *Tchut-gour*, what will become of me? The expense will ruin me. The invalid got no better, and after some days the chief decided to call in the doctor lama; his foresight was confirmed. The lama pronounced that a devil did possess the old lady, and that it must be exorcised without a moment's delay. That evening eight lamas arrived, and immediately set to work to fashion, with dried grass, a large manikin which they said was the demon of intermittent fever, and by means of a stake fastened between the legs of the figure they stuck up this manikin in the tent where the invalid inhabited.

"The ceremony commenced at eleven o'clock at night; the lamas arranged themselves in a circle at the end of the tent, furnished with cymbals, marine shells, bells, tambourines, and other instruments of their noisy music. The circle was enlarged in front by the family of the invalid, nine in number; they were all squatting on the ground and crowded together; the old woman knelt in front of the manikin which represented the fever demon. The lama doctor had before him a large copper basin full of millet-seed and little images made of flour. A smoky fire made of dried dung* cast a fantastic and wavering glare over this strange assembly.

"At a signal given the orchestra executed an overture sufficient to frighten the boldest devil. The seculars clapped their hands in cadence with the charivari of instruments and the howlings of the prayers. When this outrageous music was over, the head lama opened his book of exorcisms, which he placed on his knees. As he chanted, he took out of the basin some of the millet-seeds and threw them about, as the rubric directed. The head lama prayed now generally alone, sometimes with tones lugubrious and stifled, sometimes with loud and long bursts. Now he suddenly broke, to all appearance, into violent tones of anger, gesticulating and addressing himself to the manikin of hay. After this terrible exorcism, the chief lama gave a signal by stretching out his arms; all the lamas intoned a noisy refrain with great rapidity, all the musical instruments were put to full play; the family jumped up quickly, rushed out of the tent, and walked around it, beating the tent violently with sticks, at the same time crying out with all the force of their lungs. After having executed this noisy round three times, the file hastily

* Dried dung is the chief fuel of Tartary. We have heard it said that the same kind of fuel has been used in Ireland, which is supposed to have been anciently a Buddhist country. They use dried dung in Tartary because there are so few trees, and it is light to carry.

re-entered the tent, and each returned to his place. Then, while all the company hid their faces in their hands, the chief lama arose to set fire to the manikin. As soon as the flame began to rise, the chief lama cried out with a loud voice, and this cry was repeated by all present. The seculars seized the burning manikin and carried it off far from the tent. Whilst the demon of intermittent fever consumed amidst cries and imprecations, the lamas remained seated on the ground in the tent, intoning their prayers peaceably, gravely, and with solemnity.

"On the return of the family from their grand expedition the chanting ceased, and was replaced by shouts of joy broken by loud bursts of laughter. Soon every one rushed out of the tent, each carrying in his hand a lighted torch; a procession was formed; the seculars walked first, next came the old woman, the invalid, supported right and left by members of the family; behind the invalid marched the eight lamas with all their music in full blast. The old woman was supported to a neighbouring tent, for the lama doctor had decreed that she must not return to her own habitation until the moon had run a monthly course. After this peculiar treatment the invalid was entirely cured; the access of fever did not return."

Here is an incident of the journey of Messrs. Huc and Gabet, on their perilous road from Peking to Lhasa:—

"The fifteenth day of the new moon we encountered several caravans, following, as we did, the direction from east to west. The road was filled with men, women, and children, mounted on camels or oxen. They told us they were all going to the lamasery of Rache-Tchurin. When they asked us if our object was the same as theirs, they appeared astonished at our negative response. Their surprise roused our curiosity. At a turning of the road we overtook an old lama who appeared to walk with difficulty, as he had a heavy package on his back. 'Brother,' we said, 'thou art old, thy white hairs are more numerous than the black; thou must be fatigued; place thy burden on the back of one of our camels.' After the pilgrim was relieved of his load, when his walk had become more elastic and his countenance brighter, we asked him why all these pilgrims were pacing the desert? We are all going to Rache-Tchurin, he answered, with accents full of devotion. Without doubt some great solemnity calls you to the lamasery? Yes, to-morrow ought to be a grand day; a lama *bokt* will manifest his power; he will kill himself, but will not die. . . . We at once understood the kind of solemnity which had put all these Tartars and Ortous on the move. A lama was about to rip up his stomach, take out his entrails, place them before him, and then return to his normal state. This spectacle, atrocious and disgusting as it is, is nevertheless very common in

the lamaseries of Tartary. The *bokt* who is 'to manifest his power,' as the Mongols express it, prepares himself for this formidable act by many days of prayer and fasting. During this time he must forego all communication with other men and keep in absolute silence. When the day arrives the multitude of pilgrims assemble in the large court of the lamasery, and an altar is raised in front of the doors of the temple. The *bokt* appears. He advances gravely, the people saluting him with loud acclamations. He moves to the altar and there he sits. He draws from his belt a long cutlass which he places on his knees. At his feet a number of lamas arranged in a circle raise loud invocations. As the prayers proceed the *bokt* is perceived to tremble in all his members, and then gradually to fall into phrenetical convulsions. The lamas become more and more excited; their voices are no longer measured; their chants become disorderly, till at length their recitations are changed into howlings. And it is now that the *bokt* suddenly casts off the scarf which envelops him, detaches his belt, and, seizing the sacred cutlass, cuts up his stomach through all its length. While the blood is flowing from every part, the multitude falling before this horrible spectacle, interrogates the fanatic concerning hidden subjects, future events, on the destiny of certain persons. The *bokt* replies to all these questions by answers which are regarded as oracles by all.

"When the devout curiosity of the numerous pilgrims is satisfied, the lamas recommence the recitation of prayers with calmness and gravity. The *bokt* gathers up, with his right hand, some of the blood, carries it to his mouth, blows on it three times, and then casts it in the air with much clamour. He rapidly passes his hand over the wound and all returns to its primitive state, without leaving a trace of this diabolical operation beyond extreme languor. The *bokt* rolls his scarf again around his body, recites a short prayer with a low voice, and all is over. And now the pilgrims disperse, with the exception of the most devout, who stay to contemplate and adore the blood-stained altar.

"These horrible ceremonies occur with sufficient frequency in the large lamaseries of Tartary and Thibet. We do not the least believe that facts of this kind can be always placed to the account of trickery, for after all we have seen and heard among idolatrous nations we are persuaded that the demon plays a great part in the matter. Beyond this, our belief is fortified in this respect by the opinion of the Buddhists, who are best instructed and most honest, whom we have encountered in the numerous lamaseries we have visited.

"All lamas have not the power to operate these prodigies. Those, for example, who have the horrible capacity of cutting

themselves open are never found among the lamas of higher rank. They are ordinarily simple lamas of bad character, and held in small esteem by their colleagues. The lamas who are sensible generally asseverate their horror of spectacles of this description. In their eyes all these operations are perverse and diabolical. The good lamas, they say, have it not in their power to execute things of this kind, and are careful to guard against seeking to acquire the impious talent.

"Although these demoniac operations are generally decried in the well-regulated lamaseries, nevertheless the superiors do not prohibit them. On the contrary, there are during the year certain days of solemnity reserved for these disgusting spectacles. Interest is doubtless the sole motive which can urge the chief lamas to permit actions which their conscience disproves.

"The above is one of the most notable *sié-fa*, i.e., 'perverse powers' possessed by the lamas. Others of a like kind are less grandiose and more in vogue. These they practise at home and not on public solemnities. They will heat a piece of iron red hot and lick it with their tongues. They will make incisions in their bodies, and an instant after not the least trace of the wound remains, &c., &c. All these operations should be preceded by prayers.

"We once met a lama who, as every body said, could fill a vase with water by repeating a prayer. We could never get him to do this in our presence. He used to tell us that as we did not hold the same faith as he did, his attempts would be not only fruitless, but, moreover, would expose him to great danger. One day he recited to us the prayer of his *sié-fa* as he called it. The form was not long, but it would be easy to recognise an invocation direct for the assistance of the demon. It was this. 'I know thee; thou knowest me. Come, old friend, do what I ask thee. Bring the water and fill this vase which I hold up. What is it for thy great power just to fill a vase with water? I know that thou puttest a good price upon a vase of water, but what signifies that: do what I ask of thee, and fill this vase that I present. Later we will make up our accounts. On the day fixed thou wilt take all that belongs to thee.' Sometimes these formularies are without effect, then the prayers change to abuse and imprecations against him who was invoked but just before."

The missionaries determined to become spectators of this famous scene as detailed by their fellow-travellers, when a lama should "kill himself and yet not die." They came to this conclusion with the hope that their presence might deter the obnoxious ceremony. M. Huc says—"To encourage us in our design we rejoiced in recalling the history of Simon Magus, who, through the prayer of St. Peter, was stopped in his flight through

the air, and precipitated from on high at the feet of his admirers." Singularly enough, however, a chapter of accidents befel them on the way. First their old lama guide left them for a road leading to an encampment behind a mountain they were passing in order to buy provisions. One of the fathers, M. Gabet, mounted on his camel, followed the pilgrim lama for the same purpose, while M. Huc and their servant were left to pursue the regular route. These latter, however, first lost their way, then the baggage camel, usually so quiet, made a regular stampede, followed by M. Huc's horse and the servant's mule. Then the missionaries lost each other, nor did they meet again until it was too late for the *sié-fa*, for they did not arrive at the lamasery of Rache-Tchurin until the day after the performance.

W. R. T.

[Let us add that however disgusting and improper the purpose for which the above power was exerted, yet it demonstrates the existence of psychological faculties and spiritual relations which, guided by good and intellectual motives, might be of incalculable benefit to mankind. The missionaries have evidently been ignorant of spiritual science, and hence looked on these phenomena as superstitiously as the performers and devotees. The Dervishes of Western Asia exercise similar powers.—Ed. *H. N.*]

NOTE.—In the first article of this series, which appeared last month, some typographical errors occur. The word "Thibet" in note is prefixed by the article *la* instead of *le*; and on page 494, line 6th, after the word "moreover," "not" should have been inserted, which reverses the meaning expressed.

THE SUFFERINGS OF A WIFE POISONER IN THE SPIRIT WORLD.

(To the Editor.)

DEAR SIR,—I am entirely of your opinion, that Spiritualism is yet only at the investigation stage. During the process, however, I think it will not be a bad plan, nor contrary to the scientific method, to take stock of the knowledge already acquired, observe one's position, number the adherents, and mark the present level attained, before proceeding to gain a higher one. There is one point upon which Spiritualists are all agreed, and that is the possibility of communication between the incarnated and the disincarnated, or in other words, the living and the dead. The thousands of facts observed leave no doubt of this, and the logical consequence of this certainty is the immortality of our individuality. But what is the law which governs this communication? How are we to arrive at a knowledge of the means necessary to evoke

exactly the spirit desired, and what certain proof can be obtained of his identity? Hitherto it is all a mystery. Is there no way, dear sir, by means of the many re-unions of which your publications are the echo, to put such questions occasionally at all the circles, and endeavour to obtain a rational solution? I think that its importance will strike you, for scepticism will no longer be possible, when a proceeding recognised by science can be discovered by which a channel may be made for any spirit required, and who is able to prove his identity.

In the meanwhile, do you not think with me that it would be interesting to gather from the spirits themselves, information about their super-terrestrial existence? In comparing their different teachings, can not we get some idea of the laws which govern that world which all of us in our turn will have to become acquainted with? Would not a knowledge of these laws, if it could be obtained, serve as a land-mark leading eventually to what I alluded to above—a criterion of super-terrestrial communications, always using our experience and reason in accepting or rejecting the assertions of the spirits. I think it useful and profitable to gather and carefully make a note of what they say, and thus to furnish materials in the search of truth. This is what has induced me to send you a narration made me by a spirit with whom I have been in relation for many years. A few words of explanation are necessary.

Three hundred years ago, a person whose name you must excuse me for not mentioning, was living in a town in the south of Germany; he was a learned, well-informed man, acquainted with all the knowledge of his century. He had married at a ripe age a young woman whom he loved to distraction. In company with rare qualities, however, were to be found great defects. He had a hasty and vindictive temper, and his great love caused him to be blindly jealous. He believed his wife was unfaithful to him, and the idea of vengeance took possession of his soul. He did not kill her in a moment of anger, but being a skilful chemist he gradually poisoned her, watching with satisfaction the punishment of her treachery. This crime accomplished with an extraordinary subtlety remained undiscovered. He lived long afterwards respected by his contemporaries, suffering more from the grief of having been deceived, than from remorse on account of the act he had committed with such vengeful and pitiless perseverance. Wonderful to relate, he did not cease to love the woman he had caused to die a lingering death. He loved her in killing her, he loved her when dead, and this love increased in intensity when he thought of the happiness he had lost.

It was only after an acquaintance of several years that this

spirit decided to relate his life to me. He always believed in the culpability of his wife, and could not hear her name mentioned without suffering the greatest pain. But a little while ago the truth became apparent to him, and he discovered that his wife had been calumniated, and that his crime had been committed against an innocent person. He has found the spirit of his wife pure and shining—she who has never ceased to love him, and who now helps him to become better, and has pardoned him.

Please to observe that more than three hundred years have elapsed between the crime and the pardon, and that neither he nor she have been re-incarnated; nevertheless, progress has taken place, light shines upon this poor tormented soul, and his happiness has commenced.

I was curious to know what sensations so material a soul had experienced upon quitting the earth, and I found a striking analogy between them and those of a spirit whose account of his experiences I published in Mr. Pierart's journal last January. I will now give the spirit's own relation of his journey to the other life. "I felt a terrible agony at the moment of my quitting my envelope, this agony was not only moral, it was also organic. I experienced an indescribable physical fatigue, then my eyes became clouded, and I was all at once transported into the midst of a thick and dark mist. After an interval of I cannot tell you how long, this darkness began gradually to diminish, and I felt myself a little relieved; I was able to distinguish, though confusedly, objects. I tried to move, but all movement was impossible. I felt no support anywhere, neither could I find my body; I felt like a swimmer supported in the water, for I seemed to be thus floating: this state was agonising, for my perception was awake without my being able to comprehend what was happening around me. I remained thus for some time, after which the cloud became less dense and I was able to see myself in the midst of an unknown crowd, composed of spirits who were surrounding me and making game of me. My first desire when I recovered recollection of earthy things, was to see my body again, and what had belonged to me. I felt a singular and powerful attachment for all my surroundings during the latter portion of my earthy career. Then the revival of my memory enabled me to recall all the actions of my life, and this examination filled me with remorse and suffering. Remorse indeed followed close upon the awakening of memory, the first image that appeared before me like a horrible apparition, was that of my poor Wilhelmine. I saw my victim writhing in the agony so long caused by my dire vengeance; her large eyes fixed upon me burned me with the fire of the executioner. This terrible vision lasted a long while; I tried in vain to escape from

it; this was quite impossible, because I carried it with me. Then one day I saw myself suddenly illuminated with a bright light, and I heard a spirit whose face was unknown to me, speaking of God and repentance. I was so overcome with anger, that not only did I blaspheme with my mouth, but I was driven mad through incredulity—I sank again into a dreadful darkness. The cloud that surrounded me became so thick, that I seemed to be enveloped in fetid mud; it seemed as if I had found my body, and that it was consumed by burning coals, and that my sense of smell was restored to me only that I might be tortured by the emanations of a heavy and infected atmosphere. All hope had disappeared. I am unable to say how much time was thus consumed, I only know that I was horrified by the sight and touch of foul reptiles when light again appeared, and this time I recognised my father in the spirit who came to my assistance. Advice now had more effect, I yielded to it, and for the first time repentance found its way to my heart and I prayed.

“Prayer produced a great calm and an almost general mitigation of my suffering. A number of the elect joined me in my prayer, and we remained friends for some time. A ray of light traversed my cloud and bathed me in its mild refulgence; I experienced the satisfaction of an invalid who, after long confinement, is allowed to breathe the fresh air. I began to hope for pardon, and as I perceived that prayer modified the atmosphere, in making it more sweet and pure, I prayed—I prayed to God with fervour. Unfortunately, at the bottom of my heart there was hatred of mankind, and this prevented the complete re-establishment of my happiness; I remained plunged in a deep apathy, only animated by two sentiments—love to God, and attraction towards the infinite. I was, however, indignant at being excluded from the band of elect. Then it was that I saw approach the spirit that had first spoken to me: he explained to me that he had been appointed my guardian during my earthly career. He spoke about the mission that each spirit has to fulfil towards men, in order to redeem evil by good. I returned among the living, I assisted the suffering, fulfilling a duty, but without any love for humanity. This lasted a very long time, after which it was permitted me to enter into relation with you. My guardian angel had been the messenger of peace and partly of pardon. You, my friend, have been the rainbow of love which has united me to humanity. I am still occasionally troubled, but these attacks are short and promptly disappear with prayer.

“My narrative is finished, I have suffered cruelly, but how can I describe to you the beatitude with which my soul is inundated when after prayer I am filled with the hope of pardon. What are three hundred years—a thousand years in comparison with

eternity—an atom: the life of man only fills an imperceptible space in its duration, and to redeem the evil which is committed in a life-time, you see what a length of time and what sufferings are necessary. Let that give you an idea of the purity of God. You must be more than pure to please him. His bounty has no limits; for an expiation very small with respect to the infinite, gives us peace and glory for all eternity.”

It is not without reason, dear sir, that I insist upon the importance of this recital. If, on the one hand, it is necessary to pass the revelations that come to us from beyond the tomb through the sieve of our examination, it is certain that the spirits are competent to inform us as to their mode of existence. A study of their impressions and sensations becomes then indispensable, and the similarity of their assertions enables us to conclude as to the law that governs them.

Now it appears to me that two profound teachings may be drawn from what has just been read. The first is the possibility of progressing and becoming better in the super-terrestrial life, without having to undergo the necessity of a re-incarnation. Here is a great criminal guilty of crime committed in cold blood, with a barbarous persistence that makes one tremble. Assuredly this soul is very material at the time of abandoning his envelope. Will it be obliged to take on another terrestrial existence, in order to redeem itself and reach a higher level?—by no means; its punishment is inflicted in the new world that it inhabits, and thus progress is attained without quitting that world. The suffering is great and purification slow, for it has lasted nearly four hundred years, but it follows its course and happiness succeeds to suffering. The problem of purification without re-incarnation is then solved by this history. But I find something in it yet more pertinent, if I may be allowed to say so, and which illustrates one of the phases of this life about which we are endeavouring to discover all the facts. The reader will not fail to have remarked a final phrase in which the spirit attributes his returning love for humanity to his connection with me. It is my custom to treat the spirits according to the moral state that their communications indicate. If there are superior ones whose advice one listens to with religious respect, there are many more who are inferior to us in morality and intelligence. The faults of the one in question had attracted my attention, and during many years I have exhorted him to overcome them, I did so with love, with perseverance, as if I had been speaking to a well beloved brother in the flesh. Shortly afterwards I succeeded in modifying, and calming, and bending this unsubdued character, and my affection for him has been the means of his transformation. If the dead can affect the moral condition of

the living, they in their turn can have some influence over the dead, and the extent of influence depends upon the degree of purification. There is then another link that unites us, a new proof that departed souls continue to live a life identical to ours, that they are connected with our existence, and the materiality of our terrestrial garment is the only obstacle to the perception of that intimacy.

A whole world of questions arose in my mind upon listening to the recital that you have just read. Here are the principal ones with the answers—they are the fitting complement to this narration. *Q.* When you came to yourself, did you see, together with spirits, a material world? *A.* To tell you the truth, everything around me was troubled and obscure, I found myself cast into infinite space where I saw neither earth, nor vegetation, nor water, nothing, in short, material; I was suspended in the atmosphere without having anything to support me. *Q.* When did the vision of the material world begin? *A.* As I have already related, it was horrible. I seemed to be in a great deep, immersed in filth, and my visual perceptions were terrified by frightful reptiles which surrounded me. Afterwards, when prayer had brought a little calm to my mind in the midst of my sufferings, I had more agreeable material visions. The earth was smiling, and the flowers that paved it perfumed the atmosphere. What is more singular still, is, that having been in life very fond of butterflies, I had a beautiful vision of them. The whole of this picture was illuminated by a light a thousand times more pure than the light of your sun. *Q.* When you became aware that the material world you saw was an illusion, did the vision continue. Did this vision become modified or indeed disappear altogether as you became more purified? *A.* I think I have already told you, that we carry within ourselves all the charming or gloomy worlds—I will add, that just as purification is only brought about gradually, it is only by degrees that visions of things that remind us of earth disappear. When a spirit becomes more elevated he rejoices in, I will not say pleasures more pure, but more ideal. We are able, however, to see events transpiring on earth, which we endeavour to make ourselves acquainted with, in order to help those whom we have in charge. *Q.* Does every delusive vision disappear then so that you only behold the reality of the globes existing in space? *A.* All the stars are accessible to us, and there are no longer any secrets in nature for us, but we are not permitted to teach them to the living, for it is by his own intelligence that each must arrive at truth. *Q.* When you were able to have a vision of terrestrial beauties, did you find yourself alone? *A.* No, I was in company with many other spirits, who like me appeared calm and in the enjoyment of

happiness. But we heard the purified spirits who were exhorting us to become better; their melodious voices made us understand how sweet it is to pardon and to love. Ah, dear friend, there are no human words that can express the indulgence, the tenderness, the love, these holy ones bear to sufferers. *Q.* Has Wilhelmine appeared to you since you perceived her on the occasion of your first leaving this world? *A.* No my friend. In my first vision it was not her herself—it was only her image which remorse caused me to see; one might say perhaps, that it was a punishment inflicted on me, but that would not be correct. God the prototype of infinite goodness does not punish. He endeavours by trials to lead us back into the right way, into peace and universal love. When I attained her degree of purity, she came to me with words of pardon—that was the only time that I really met her spirit. *Q.* So you had not seen her until a short while ago, for three hundred years? *A.* You know how grievous to me it was to be separated from her, and you also know how great was my joy when the state of my purification allowed me to approach and associate with her. But being much more advanced in her purification than myself, she is before me, but I hope to get up to her by following all her good advice. I must add, that the love that reigns here cannot be compared with anything of the kind among you, however pure it may be. The love that unites us is universal, it has no choice or preference for any one; it is sweet for us to be re-united to those we loved upon earth, but until we come to feel for all the same power of affection, our purification cannot be complete. *Q.* Does the mission of the guardian angel continue after death, or do other spirits replace that one, and so continue to change in proportion as purification is made? *A.* The soul changes its guides as it progresses—thus it is that spirits fulfil their mission. *Q.* When you think of your past life, do you only see the evil that you have done, or does your entire life rise in your memory with all its details. *A.* When I was able to see it clearly, you know that it was through the intercession of my father—he caused the review to pass before me, or I should rather say, we made the review together of all my actions. He reprimanded me for all that was reprehensible, but not only did he set before my eyes the good and the evil that I had done, but he pointed out all the occasions where I had neglected to do the good I might have done. And all was put to my account; this was the general judgment.

If we were to provoke similar revelations from all such spirits that are willing to give them, we should find that only one deduction could be drawn from their own words.—Accept my fraternal salutation.

L. F. CLAVAIROZ.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIETY.

(To the Editor of *Human Nature*.)

IN continuation of the matter already published, aiming at an improved state of society, the "Spirits" say Cry loud and spare not, neither day nor night, until you have emancipated yourselves from the tyranny of money, and the iniquities practised through all your trading intercourse, and every relationship of life be established in righteousness and truth, for it is villanously too palpable in many particulars that Our Father's House still remains a den of thieves.

Let us then proclaim anew, in all its force and meaning, the "Revolution" commenced by "Christ," and never rest satisfied until we have established *the True Conditions of the Christian Life*. For, it is clear enough, from the disaffections existing in the religious world, no less than in the social and political, that we are not practically nearer to the life of God in the soul, as true disciples of Christ, than were those who lived two thousand years ago. To continue pandering to the weakness and folly of the times is nothing but a base abnegation of *duty*, no less to ourselves than to posterity, thereby allowing the most unscrupulous and least deserving—for the world is now in the hands of such—to usurp all the normal conditions of life, and employ them against the free exercise of that which we feel and know to be best. This disregard of the most sacred monitions of our nature perpetuates injustice every way, and calls aloud to Heaven for redress. Nothing can excuse or palliate sinning against the light of one's own judgment, or "truth" revealed through any other source; therefore, an attempt will now be made to connect the virtuous and God-fearing men throughout the nations of the earth into a "Holy League, for mutual help and support against the oppressions of all evil and wrong-doing."

Having taken upon ourselves to speak for God and the Truth, let the world see to it, and take heed, for it shall stand as a recording angel; the bonds of iniquity will be broken, and the race of man become more blessed.

As we would not tolerate in our midst the manufacture and sale of an article, whereby the unfortunate are deprived of their senses, and thus not only murder themselves but their fellow-creatures, and thereby commit all sorts of indecencies, neither would we allow insincere or untruthful practice in any other way whatever; for all profession of virtue must for ever stand condemned, so long as it lives in open immorality with bad and vicious practice, and not until we have established the *condition* of virtue *is it possible* for virtue *to exist* in any normal sense.

The anxieties incidental to the present state of things are surely

enough to arouse the most dormant. How *can any one* rest and be satisfied in the midst of such reckless, idle, and pampered extravagance on the one hand, and wretched misery of the people on the other, to say nothing of the real workers who have to create the resources, whereby this system of prisons, poor-houses, asylums, and an unproductive army of good-for-nothings exist? And when any of these anomalous proceedings do struggle through and make themselves heard, what years of painful agitation and herculean labours are imposed upon the honest legislator! Not until we have *redeemed ourselves* from all those damaging features in our present system, *are we worthy* of redemption in any higher sense, nor *can* our cries rise acceptably to the Throne of Mercy and Grace for our shortcomings in any other respect. The best energies of our lives, and the physical resources of the world, are all comparatively lost—frittered away and squandered by our present unholy proceedings, and we must continue to remain the pinched, contracted, unhandsome *personalities that we are*, so long as existing in this warfare of contending interests. The soul of man is one, and all creation incidental thereto. Everything in being has its existence conditionally, and these *conditions, constituting the sum of all difference*, form the groundwork of all knowledge, and “righteous” action can only transpire out of a sacred regard to all these particulars and contingent circumstances. Hence, all *partial* conduct will be for ever discarded, and the whole course of the present system become changed; for, not until we sell all that we have and give to the poor (this is Christ’s mode of stating the matter) can we enter into His kingdom; but this we know can be done, and the whole community, enriched and redeemed by a continuance of the process, and this earthly state be made a heavenly one.

Man, viewed in any high sense, is the grand repository of the ever-living and abiding Presence, and we ought, individually and collectively, to represent a more becoming and worthy expression of this beneficent love towards each other. The best of all that has transpired since the race began ought thus to become the normal heritage of every human being, and be the foundation of a progress in the future beyond all that the eye hath seen or the heart of man conceived; for it is our Father’s good pleasure to give us His Kingdom if we would but more worthily use it for each other’s good.

In thus taking the soundings, as it were, for future navigation I am not unmindful of the “vested interests,” as the Bishop kindly put it in behalf of the publicans, and trust that while being no less deferential I may succeed in the good without extenuating any bad means. We hear on all hands the same tale about the anxieties and difficulties of parents in sending forth

their sons into the world, as it is felt that trade is very unsatisfactory and the professions so very crowded; and truly, the contingencies connected with the present state of things are quite sufficient to make any one pause before being committed to its tender mercies. We know the bitter and cruel experiences that too often attend these young artless souls in their struggles for success and their dread of poverty; and know also of their tears, bitter, galling tears, and alas, not unfrequently their deep curses against the day that gave them birth and sent them forth to such unhallowed and wretched scramblings—to say nothing of the unhealthy condition of mind and body arising from this system of crowding in large towns.

Well, we have contemplated arrangements to overcome these sad features, as it is not believed that we are thus irremediably doomed to perpetuate everlastingly this warfare of conflicting interests, but that, by God's help, we may attain to an eminence of executive power and influence for good amongst each other that shall be the means of establishing something more in harmony with the divine integrity of our nature, and for ever dispense with all false play and subterfuge.

Our philosophy is—realise for man a normal status in creation. We are not at all satisfied with any adjudication that makes man a mistake, or that blurts in the face of Nature that humanity is altogether a blunder. Let us have done with this chaff, and no longer confound the knowable with that which cannot be known, or neglect those considerations directly pertaining to that which we are; and, through the formation of a correct system, conserve the good and discard the bad, practically applying all the lessons hitherto learnt for the good of man. The grand object will be to make the best human beings possible, not to offer the man up as a sacrifice to labour, but that his work shall minister to the special end in view: man's highest happiness and the attainment of all truth for further application in promoting that end.

It is proposed to make the matter operative at once, by a carefully arranged system for training and unfolding the young, not only through all the ordinary resources of oral and intellectual instruction, but in practically manipulating the trades and operations whereby people get housed, clothed, and fed, and thus enable them to conquer circumstances, and become the foundation and missionaries of a brotherhood that should extend itself and become the civilised world in some true sense of that term.

It is felt that all this noise being made throughout the land on the question of National Education does not meet the most vital consideration of the case; for supposing that, after another quarter of a century has been spent in these overheated conten-

tions as to what shall and what shall not be taught, we do realise for any child coming into the world a thorough instruction in all the ordinary rudiments of learning, and that of a kind to satisfy the most particular in religion and morality, the true problem involved remains untouched, for not until we have made the practice of virtue and truth the normal condition of our mutual existence, and have thus a society divested of every temptation to any selfish or untruthful ends, are we one bit nearer to the Christian life, all this church and chapel going notwithstanding.

One grand and most sacred institution for human redemption has been sadly neglected, if not abominably abused. However, it will eventually be seen that "woman" is the royal road to elevation and improvement; but this comes later—sufficient for us to lay the foundation, the glorious future will unfold itself fast enough afterwards.

We think from the position already taken by Mr. Burns that he must be admirably qualified for the adoption and application of these views—he is already, in fact, the centre of such a system, and might just as easily embrace the subject throughout. We shall be glad to have his say on the question, also that of others who may feel interested.

R. D.

Manchester.

THE ORIGIN OF RELIGIOUS DOGMAS.*

THE most devoted friends of the human race have in all ages given special attention to the question of religious progress. These have found that, while the cramping pressure of religious falsehood and bigotry narrowed down the mental compass of a man or a people, it was impossible to instil new views of any kind, or improve the general condition of the man or the masses. The religious convictions of mankind are too often based upon assumptions—that which is unknown—scarcely ever on knowledge, science. The reformer, in his attacks upon ignorance, always clashes with religion. He either denies the assumptions, or advances facts to supersede them. All science has had to fight its way to recognition and usefulness under the guns of the fortresses of religion.

In their labours for humanity teachers have adopted very different

* On the Connection of Christianity with Solar Worship. Translated from the French of M. Dupuis. Together with the report of the Jubilee and Conference, held at Darlington, and other important matters, and demonstrable Facts indicative of a Religion founded on the Principles of Nature. Price 1s.; to the purchasers of this number of *Human Nature*, price 6d., post free, 8½d. This work may be considered excellent value for 6d., seeing that the postage is 2½d. A quantity should be got down in one parcel to save carriage.

tactics in respect to religion. The negative mind not only rejects the convictions entertained by the religionist, but he also overlooks the relations respecting which said convictions are formed. Another class of reformers lets religion as such alone, and engages in positive efforts at imparting to society the simple facts of existence. We think it is possible to pursue yet a third course with advantage, embracing a greater variety of interests, and presenting a choice of avenues to the human mind.

If we take the Christian religion as it is at present recognised amongst us, we find a curious combination of diverse elements. But it must be remembered that the popular religion is at present in a state of rapid transition. The scientific discoveries and humanitarian movements of the present age have entirely obliterated many dogmas, dulled the edge of cutting anathemas, and rendered unintelligible grave rites and usages. Yet a great deal remains, and let us see of what it is composed.

First, There is the moral law and rule of neighbourly feeling, and conscientious rectitude common to man as a being. This is natural religion in practical action, and the basis of all religions. But as man's moral nature recognises societary relations, so does his intellect appreciate truth according to its degree of development, and hence the love of Truth and Right are inborn qualities, and finds expression in the Christian religion in common with that of all enlightened and civilised peoples.

Secondly, There is a recognition of spiritual life and activity interfering, under special circumstances, with the affairs of men. The authority for this idea is derived from the Old and New Testaments, and Jesus and the apostles are its latest and purest manifestation. Thus the Christian is theoretically a spiritualist—or, rather, spiritualistic believer—with a vague dreamy notion of immortality and man's relation to the spirit-world. This part of religion is much modified by the individual consciousness and the theological views associated with it.

Thirdly, The popular religion has a peculiar theology or theory of the Godhead, and the moral government of the universe. This is in part derived from the Bible, but much of it has an origin outside of that book.

Fourthly, There are the particular dogmatic teachings and ceremonies in which the practical administration of religion is clothed. There are the various forms of Church discipline and government—fasts, feasts, and observances. These more external, and, it may be called, conventional and artificial appendages of religion, are indeed its most distinctive features, and that ground on which sectarian bitterness and animosity are founded.

Now the pure and undefiled religionist, as he styles himself, boasts of his resting his convictions and fashioning his moral practices upon the sayings and doings of Jesus of Nazareth and his followers. The primitive religionist deplores the externalism and showy dress of the fashionable religion. The natural religionist

also, who bases his views upon the discovered facts of man's nature, finds instructive corroboration of his own experiences in the sacred records of the past; and here the natural religionist and the unsophisticated Bible religionist join hands, and with one voice ask, Where does the Church get all her incomprehensible theology, unbending dogmas, harsh uncharitable denunciations, superstitious notions, stupid observances, fantastic rites, and meaningless denominational peculiarities? These religionists exclaim, Such things are not to be found in the work of Jesus. They are not recorded in the Gospels, nor enforced in the Epistles, and the wonder is—where did the Church get them? This most important question is argued in a singularly clear and instructive manner in the work which is offered as a premium volume this month. The author, M. Dupuis, was an eminent French encyclopædist and celebrated astronomer. His classical attainments and scientific knowledge specially fitted him for the task thus rendered. He read carefully the old authors, and diving into the abyss of centuries, returned with large fragments of the religious systems which preceded Christianity. Here he found the source from whence these anomalies which are to be found in religion had been derived. The religion of Mithra, the Sun worship—which at one time prevailed in all parts of the world, but in the highest perfection in Persia—gave rise to the symbols which are now revered in the Churches of Great Britain. Our Christmas and Easter, our slain Lamb and crafty serpent, and the whole magazine of forms and phrases which constitute the vesture of religious thought, are simply the relicts of a now degraded paganism, the original meaning of which is not apprehended by modern worshippers.

The possession of such knowledge as this suggests a larger method of working for religious reform and human progress. The friend of man can now not only teach the essentials of a positive religion, but satisfactorily explain the source and meaning of those dead forms and ideas which are the great hindrance to the acceptance of demonstrable religious truth. To such teachers the work of M. Dupuis will be of special value. A version has just been translated into English by Mr. Partridge, who paid for its being printed in extra supplements of the *Medium*. An extra supply was produced, and now these numbers, with a few others, have been collected and bound together, and are being sold as a work which not only elucidates the origin of dogmatic religion, but also teaches the positive evidences of a natural religion, such as the recent discoveries of Spiritualism furnish.

This work should be industriously circulated amongst freethinkers and Bible critics, who delight in the study of comparative mythology, and the reform of religious abuses. It will introduce the subject of Spiritualism to such minds, and help them to the solution of those religious problems which may for years have occupied their attention.

To the Editor of Human Nature.

DEAR SIR,—I am sorry a proof was not submitted to me of my letter on "Gravitation" in your last number, as I find several important printer's errors, which I must ask you to correct.

Page 510—4th line of *note*, for assumed speed, read assumed apex.

6th line of note—*after fell*, insert *but*.

5 lines from bottom of note—for sign, read *sine*.

Page 511—1st line, for reading, read rendering.

16th line, *after orbit*, omit, or.

Throughout, Phillips is spelt with one l, instead of two.

Yours truly,

THOMAS GRANT.

OLYMPIA COLONNA: A TALE OF MÆDIEVAL MAGIC.

BY MRS. J. W. JACKSON.

CHAPTER XXIII.—FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

FOR three weeks Marco Colonna and his fair child had not mingled in the busy life of Ferrara—for three weeks they had heard nothing of the petty feuds and factions amongst the nobles, or the hungry cry of the people; not that the good physician was weary of well-doing, but because the new Duke had been compelled to open his grain store, and the inhabitants bought corn to make bread. There was little change in the scholar's appearance since he was first introduced to the reader—the years, as they went by, deepened the lines of thought and care, and tinged his flowing beard and hair with a whiter hue. The eye lost none of its fire, or his form its commanding majesty—there was the same calm repose on the classic face, and the old sweet smile played around the mouth.

The years that shed a halo over the head of the sire had but ripened the rare loveliness of the child. Olympia had expanded into the stately and beautiful woman. If her witching smile was less oftener seen, the loss was amply compensated by the sweet low-toned tenderness of her voice. Truly, Father Paulo had described her beauty as unearthly—it was too pure and bright for this dark, crime-stained world of ours—it was too holy and dazzling for wicked, ungrateful Ferrara.

Unconscious of the machinations against him, Dr. Colonna was in his laboratory busily employed in smelting gold, and trying to form the diamond. He had already made some as large as a pin's head. His aim was to increase their size and purity. So intent was the alchemist in his occupation, he did not observe his daughter's entrance. She seemed like some bright angel who had strayed from Paradise to Pandemonium, so striking was the contrast between the golden hair and white robes of Olympia with the black-curtained laboratory and flaming furnace; while old Colonna, whose face was brought fully out by the ruddy glare, made no bad representative of the Arch Enemy watching the horrors of lost souls in the Inferno.

"My father, are you busy—will you listen to me awhile?" said a musical voice at his side. The old man suspended his labours, and gazed fondly at the radiant visitant.

"Am I ever too busy to listen to thee, my Olympia?"

"No, dear father," said the young girl, stooping to kiss him. "But, too

busy to attend to your own safety. To-day there was a council held in the palace, and the Signory have denounced thee as a heretic and sorcerer—thou who hast healed and fed the people, when those accursed priests fled in terror,” cried Olympia passionately, throwing her arms round the old man’s neck.

Very gently Colonna repressed her vehemence. “Bless, and curse not, my daughter. Hast thou forgotten the divine precepts, because mere mortal men plot mischief and harbour wrath. It has ever been so since the beginning—the prophet hath been stoned and the Saviour crucified. Shall I escape the usual fate of those who have saved their country? My dear child, my end draws near—my mission is almost accomplished. But for you, my Olympia, I should be glad to be at rest.” Colonna drew his beautiful child closer to his bosom.

“But, father, you will not tamely wait until Father Paulo and his myrmidons carry you off?” said Olympia, as soon as her grief would permit her to speak.

“My child would not ask her father to do anything unworthy of a Colonna? I shall do my duty. Surely they will judge justly?”

“What madness possesses thee, my father? Did they judge Adrian justly?—did they judge Father Savanorola justly? If they burned the Frate, what hast thou to expect—a sorcerer and heretic? How tender the Church is to those who dare think for themselves. Oh, father, fly while there is yet time—for my sake; for the sake of my sainted mother, fly; thy life is very precious to me. Should they take thee, who will protect Olympia, the witch?” cried his daughter, in agony kneeling at her father’s feet.

“God will protect thee, my beloved daughter, more powerfully than a feeble old man on whose head seventy winters have left their snows.”

“Father, listen to me! To-day, in the trance, I heard the crafty priest and bigoted prince denounce thee, and set a price on thy head. The stake awaits thee—torture will rack thy limbs! The base cowards, whom thou hast healed and fed, will pelt thee with stones, and assail thine ears with foul execrations; and I shall die without my noble father. Oh! listen to me. Irene pleads in heaven, and Olympia pleads on earth! Harken to us, oh! father mio.”

Deep agony wrung the scholar’s heart. His child had touched a powerful chord, and the sunny memories of other years rushed over his stricken soul in a lava tide. The proud head bowed until the silver and golden locks of youth and age mingled.

“You will fly, my father! thou hast a powerful friend and protector in Abas, the great Shah. Hasten to Persia; he will receive thee with honour,” murmured Olympia, straining her lips to his.

“Oh, my Olympia! thou triest me sorely. I will not fly from man. I will do my duty to the last. God gave me life to live, and work to do, and I will finish both in Ferrara; but thou, my beloved, my precious child, shall seek the protection of Abas. The old magician can give thee a befitting escort, and presents worthy of a Sultan’s acceptance.”

“No, my father! should all the world forsake thee, I will remain by thy side. Olympia Colonna can die as becomes a Christian maiden—she will not shame thee!”

“My noble, glorious Olympia! thou art worthy to be called a Colonna; but I may not sacrifice thy young life for mere selfish affection. Thou shalt take Zamora and Irene as thine attendants, besides thy faithful page, and depart from this unhappy country with all haste, and——”

“Leave you alone in your distress? No, no! I will never do that. Let me die with you, my father, since you will not live for me.”

After much entreaty on Olympia's part, and reluctance on her father's, he consented to let her remain with him in Ferrara for a time. Well the inspired girl knew the doom that awaited her beloved parent, as well as the sufferings in store for herself; but she was too noble and devoted to cast a shadow upon the last hours of peace and happiness her father should spend on earth. Olympia, seeing her pleadings were unavailing, carefully concealed the tragic part she would be called upon to play in the approaching drama. Her clairvoyant eyes saw all the horrible detail—the treachery of their judges—the scorn and jeers of the ungrateful populace, who, a few weeks before, almost worshipped them.

"My poor father! God help him, and shield his grey hairs from so dire a fate! They will be here by midnight. I will give him a powerful draught, so the rack may not extort a murmur from his lips. The miscreants shall not gloat over his sufferings. God of the universe! why dost thou permit man to torture and crush his fellow-man? What has my father done, that he should be at the mercy of such earth-worms, blind and cruel?" cried poor Olympia, clasping her hands in despair. It yet wanted three hours of sunset. There was little time to prepare for the impending danger. Minutes were hours to the devoted daughter. Leaving her father, she descended to the room usually occupied by her, and summoned Zamora. "Thou must leave Ferrara after sundown, and seek the hut by the riverside, where lives the hermit Emillo. Deliver this package into his hand without fail, and take this ring for a token from me. Abide there, thou and Irene, until I come. See thou art not followed by any one. God speed and guide thee on thy errand, Zamora," said her mistress, unable to conceal her agitation.

"Are you in danger, dear lady?" asked the domestic, terrified at her mistress' palor and evident distress.

"There is danger, but not immediate. Hasten thou on thy way—question me not—go! it is my will." Unable to withstand the imperious "It is my will!" Zamora obeyed, and was soon on her way to the hermit's cave by the river.

CHAPTER XXIV.—ARREST OF THE SORCERER.

How quickly passed the intervening hours—all too soon for Olympia. She never left her father for an instant—with loving care she anticipated all his wants; and he, unconscious of approaching disaster, conversed calmly and smilingly upon various subjects. The ninth hour struck, breaking upon her ear as the knell of doom. In three hours more her father would be in the hands of his remorseless foes. With superhuman strength she controlled her rebellious feelings, and crushed back the rising tears. Olympia's agitation did not altogether escape her father's loving eye, as she handed him the wine prepared by her own hand.

"My father, drink this cup—it may be the last Olympia will be permitted to give thee!"

"Deemest thou danger is so near? I had hoped for a little longer time, my Olympia. Thou must hasten to the Court of Persia, while there is yet a chance of success and escape."

"Drink the wine, dear father—it will strengthen you," replied his heroic daughter, with paling cheek. She fancied she heard the tramp of armed men.

Heavens! it is no dream. Nearer and nearer the measured trampling came, and stopped before the door. Oh! how wildly her heart beats—it was the only sound in that awful stillness.

A consultation is held outside, and feet are walking round the house.

There is no escape—the house was surrounded. Olympia hastily threw a purple mantle around her. She shivers, although her temples throb and her pulse beats at fever heat. How calm and serene her pale, pure face—no ray of passion was there; the passionate grief vanished, and Olympia looks radiant in her divine repose.

"Shall we open the door, my father?—perhaps they will be more civil."

"No, my child—they are already breaking it open. We will wait them here. Take thou this ring; shouldst thou need it, open this spring, and thou wilt escape dishonour—thou art not afraid to die, my beloved. Forgive thy father for bringing this terrible humiliation on thee, my Olympia. Hark! how the bloodhounds bay for the prey. Forgive them, Great God! they sin through ignorance and evil example," said Colonna, embracing his child, as if to protect her from the rude jests of the soldiery.

The din and uproar was now fearful; heavy blows resounded on the strong oaken door, that for a time resisted the repeated shocks; more sledge hammers were applied by vigorous arms, accompanied with yells and dreadful execrations.

"Unearth the old fox and his daughter; down with the sorcerer; burn the witch! No wonder Ferrara has been visited by the plague—the accursed magician has brought it on us by his evil spells! Seize the witch and her father! they have sold themselves to the devil! burn them, and free the land from God's wrath—for he has cursed wizards and witches with an especial curse!" Hoarsely bellowing curses upon the old man and his daughter, the door fell in with a loud crash, and a dozen men, headed by Father Paulo and an officer, rushed up the broad stairs, and entered the opened door that led to where Colonna and Olympia calmly awaited their approach.

It was a striking tableau that burst upon the astonished soldiers' vision. By the soft light of the astral lamps, the dear old sitting-room was lighted up. On her accustomed chair, Olympia sat beside her father, resting her beautiful head on the old scholar's shoulder; so sad, and yet so powerful, was the expression of her large dark eyes—so winning in the mute, appealing look she cast on her father—a look that had melted the angels, and made them weep. Ah! who could look upon that proud old man, dignified and calm in his lofty sorrow, supporting that fair golden head, unmoved? Even his enemies retreated abashed and confounded. The officer stepped back a pace or two; he was unprepared for so moving a spectacle—the old man and his daughter awaiting so quietly a fate calculated to try the bravest!

"Back men! back all of you! Villains, be civil! peace, ye curs! I will speak to the doctor alone," shouted Bernardo.

"See that the witch does not enthrall thee—thou would'st not be the first she has led away! Bring her out that we may burn her!" cried the turbulent rabble.

Shutting by sheer force the strong door of the room upon the crowd, Bernardo entered the chamber, and bowed to Colonna and his daughter. "Thou art Marco Colonna, doctor of physic—art thou not?"

"I am Marco Colonna. What would you with me?" inquired the physician calmly, still supporting Olympia, who turned her swimming eyes upon the intruder, as if to plead in her father's behalf.

"Pardon me, noble sir. I am only a poor, rough soldier. In the discharge of duty, it is my painful task to arrest thee in the Duke's name—thou and thy fair daughter, the lady Olympia Colonna."

"On what charges, my son?"

"Thou and the damozella are accused of sorcery and witchcraft," replied the soldier, ashamed in spite of himself.

A scornful smile wreathed Colonna's lips. Olympia, starting to her feet, with a flashing eye and flushing cheek, indignantly confronted the officer. "Sorcery and witchcraft! The catiffs did not think so when my father fed them, and risked his life daily and hourly to wrest their children from the grave—better the base slaves had perished."

"My dear child, be tranquil; such anger becomes thee not," said Colonna with much dignity. "We are your prisoners, sir officer; do your duty; lead, and we shall follow. Olympia, dearest child, come to me—we shall not be parted!" A slight tremor was in the old man's voice as he finished speaking.

By this time the soldiers had dispersed through the house on their work of pillage and destruction. The labour of years was destroyed in a single hour—rare old manuscripts, written in the doctor's fine Roman hand, perished; paintings were torn down; gems scattered; Olympia's portrait run through with a rapier; furniture broken, and thrown out of the windows. At length the wretches got into the laboratory, where the remains of the fire still smouldered. The soldiers stamped about and howled like demons, throwing down vials and precious medicines. Oh, it was wild work! the treasures of the poor scholar's whole lifetime were scattered to the winds. Amongst the foremost and most eager was Father Paulo, gathering all he could lay his hands upon in the shape of medicines and gems—marvelling much at the rare collection of Colonna. In his haste to obtain a small vial of elixir, the sleeve of his gown caught upon a bottle of highly combustible liquid, bringing it unto the ground, or rather under the furnace. In an instant there was a blue flash, and a terrific report! The blaze blinded the priest; he reeled, and fell among the green flames! The fire, thus suddenly lighted, spread with fearful rapidity, gaining strength by the addition of other inflammatory bodies. How it roared and raged in the laboratory, suffocating the soldiers with smoke and heat! They could not open the door—the bolts were red hot! Thirty men perished in the room, along with Father Paulo! From room to room the devouring element spread, completing the work of destruction begun by the soldiers!

The dreadful fate of their companions, awed even the most reckless and hardened of the band; they unanimously ascribed it all to the sorcerer, and shook with fear in their mailed shirts, as he and his daughter passed. Only once did Olympia turn to look at the home she so loved, now in flames. Her father never looked behind him; he felt all home on earth was over—his hour was indeed come. There was a resigned look on the old man's pale face, blended with unconquerable determination. Through the broad streets they went, father and daughter, until they reached the ducal palace, at the entrance hall of which they were surrounded with soldiers.

"Sweet saints defend us! You say he caused the devil to set the house on fire?"

"Aye! Not even Father Paulo could stay the fire, and he had a bottle of holy water and piece of the true cross!"

"Santissimo! he must be the very devil himself!" whispered the men to one another, as their comrades recounted the deeds that had been done.

CHAPTER XXV.—THE INQUISITION.

THE glimmering streaks of early dawn had scarcely penetrated the darkness of night, when the bell pealed with a harsh booming sound from the towers of the Palace of Este, assembling the Signory for judgment in the secret council chamber. The grand Inquisitor-General and his familiars were there, whispering in much terror; besides a lengthy train of Jesuits,

also creatures of the Inquisition. The trial was an important one—an old man and a beautiful maiden were to be tried for practising the black art and other unholy deeds; of conspiring against the State; and of melting an effigy of wax in the likeness of the present Duke, stuck full of needles and pins, before a large fire, muttering unhallowed spells and incantations over the image, causing great suffering in the Duke's body and the withering away of his right arm! Such were the charges brought against Dr. Colonna and his daughter, in the old vaulted, blood-stained chamber, whose sombre walls had echoed the shrieks and groans of its victims for centuries, until each pillar recorded a history of blood, and each carved stone an epitome of the blackest crimes that could disgrace humanity. This ghastly chamber was hung with black, and lighted with tapers and common oil lamps. In a curtained recess stood the rack fully exposed to view, besides other engines of torture—such as thumbscrews, pincers, instruments for compressing the knees, causing exquisite pain to the sufferer. To this horrible den of crime and bigotry Marco Colonna and his daughter were led to get a fair trial. What mockery! Who ever heard of justice or mercy at the Inquisition? The clergy in all ages have been more famous for cruelty and injustice to the hapless victims of their displeasure, than magnanimity or clemency.

Beside the Inquisitor-General sat the Duke of Ferrara, the unworthy successor of Nicholas. His bold and coarse gaze of admiration caused the blood to mantle the pale cheek of Olympia—something in the man's look roused her indignation, and terrified her.

"What a beautiful witch she is! Who would have thought that the old sorcerer possessed aught so dainty? By my soul, what a pretty foot! Castelauo, she is worth securing."

"Thou canst take her and thou wilt; I like none of the devil's hatching," was the whispered reply.

"We shall see how the old man can bear his daughter's torture. That will lower his haughty crest. How kingly he carries his head, the old fiend; he shall have the greenest faggots in Ferrara to light his soul to perdition!" murmured the Prince, scowling darkly.

The bells ceased, and all the members of the secret council had entered; then the Inquisitor-General rose and addressed the prisoners:—

"Marco Colonna, and you Olympia Colonna, have been summoned before this tribunal to answer the grave charges of heresy and witchcraft. What have you to say against those charges? You are permitted to speak—the noble Signory will listen to your defence."

"Noble Alfonso, in the time of your illustrious uncle I taught in your University, and lectured to the students upon various subjects, without fear and under no evil suspicion; it was my good fortune to receive the patronage and confidence of the late Prince; he was my friend and benefactor during his life. There are many present among the Signory who can testify to mine honesty and loyalty. It has ever been my humble endeavour to promote the welfare of the State and maintain its laws. For fifty years I have laboured in Ferrara among you as a physician, and have cured many that were diseased. The arts employed were most simple—arts employed by the ancient Chaldeans and Egyptians; learned also by the great Lawgiver of Israel, when he, as a youth, was a neophyte in the Temples of Isis—he was taught to lay hands on the sick and cure them, and they were made whole. That same Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness, that those who were bitten might be healed through faith——"

"Strike the apostate on the mouth!" cried a priest standing near the prisoner.

"Peace, peace! give the old dotard time; he will commit himself. Go on, most learned sorcerer."

"I have but little more to say," replied the doctor, gazing compassionately upon his barbarous judges. "Prophets and inspired men, and the Son of Mary himself, wrought cures, as I do, by the imposition of hands; but, poor benighted souls, you cannot understand the Scriptures; you but walk according to the light you have received. Of all charges against the Church and State, my child and I are guiltless; there are many among you who, if they dared, could corroborate my statement," said Colonna, drawing himself up to his full height, and scornfully regarding the assembly.

Some minutes elapsed ere the astonished Inquisitor could speak. The daring presumption of Colonna in citing Christ as a worker of miracles by magic—for in that sense only did they understand the doctor—appalled and exasperated them to such a degree of anger that they all exclaimed at once, "To the rack with him! away with the vile heretic to torture!"

Two familiars had seized Colonna, and were about to drag him off, when the Duke interposed. "No, spare him, but take his daughter! he will feel that more keenly. Torture the witch before his eyes! Do your duty familiars."

Hitherto, Olympia had been standing mute and motionless as a statue, her head slightly bent, the long golden curls partially concealing her face from the bold, impertinent gaze of the Signory; only the convulsive movement of her fingers betrayed the intense emotion within. As the two wretches sprang forward to execute the terrible behests of Alfonso, Olympia uttered a slight scream, and drew back from their hated touch with disgust. It was an involuntary impulse she could not control. Well Alfonso calculated the effect the sight of his daughter's sufferings would produce upon Colonna. Two hot spots glowed upon his pale cheeks, and the fire flashed in his black eyes. Fiercely he turned upon the familiars, and in a low voice said—"Forbear! touch her not!" So low were the words, none heard them but Olympia, who raised her beautiful face full upon her father, so radiant in its inspired devotion. "Thanks! save thyself! they seek thy life!" she murmured in Arabic.

"What says the witch? Is she casting spells on the ministers of the Church?" cried the Inquisitor-General fiercely, lifting his hand to strike Olympia; but, strange to say, it fell powerless by his side the next instant! "Fiends! demons! seize them! drag them to the rack! put them under the slow fire!" yelled the terrified Inquisitor. Great drops of perspiration stood on his swarthy brow. Again he bellowed forth his commands. None obeyed him; the familiars seemed rooted to the ground unable to move. As might be supposed, great fear fell upon the Signory; many devoutly crossed themselves, and prayed to the Virgin and saints to protect them. Maddened at what he supposed Olympia's magical powers, Alfonso leaped down from his chair of state, and rushed to seize his victim, determined to put her on the rack with his own hands.

Again Colonna said in a loud stern voice, "Forbear! Alfonso D'Este! touch her not; she is too pure to be defiled by thy touch; dost thou require a victim? thou hast the power to choose me—but she is sacred!"

Fiercely these two men glared at each other. Like the familiars, D'Este was unable to move hand or foot; he could only give back a glance of concentrated fury to the stern defiant frown of the scholar.

"By holy Paul! I swear to have thee and thy accursed brood dragged to pieces between wild horses!" cried the Duke hoarsely.

"Thou shalt never have the power, Prince of Este; I will prevent thee! There is a nobler, holier end reserved for my gifted child than that. Nay

more; thou shalt in half an hour from this escort her to a place of safety, a free woman, at liberty to go where she wills!"

"Never, never! old sorcerer!"

"We shall see!" was the calm reply.

"Father, let them do as they will; I am ready to die; perhaps my life will satisfy them!" pleaded Olympia tearfully. "Suffer them, father; not all the torture they can apply shall make me utter a sound! I have drank of memphitis, father!"

"My child, thou should have my heart's blood, drop by drop, to procure thy happiness; but ask not that these blood-stained villains should touch the hem of thy garment: it is my will; be thou silent."

Abject terror seized every man in that secret council chamber. With livid faces and trembling knees the noble Signory implored Alfonso to liberate Olympia, and let her quit the country. For some time the self-willed Prince refused, but at last consented on the condition that the child should see the father's sufferings! The Signory reluctantly accepted the conditions, and Dr. Colonna allowed himself to be stretched on the rack, without once wincing under the operation. It was otherwise with his poor child; each wrench of the frame apart seemed to wring her very soul in agony; human nature revolted at such barbarous cruelty. Unconsciousness cut short Olympia's sufferings; she sank at Alfonso's feet in a deadly swoon, and the young officer who had escorted her and her father to prison lifted the insensible girl and bore her from the scene of such horrors.

"See that she bewitch thee not, Bernardo! keep her under close custody," shouted one of the Inquisitors standing by the rack.

"Poor lady!" murmured the young soldier; "had she been a witch, she would never have fallen into the hands of incarnate devils like these accursed Inquisitors. If I cannot save the father, I will aid his daughter for the sake of those sweet eyes."

CHAPTER XXVI.—THE HERMIT BY THE RIVER.

ZAMORA and Irene, followed by Olympia's faithful page, hastened by the most unfrequented ways to the river. Something in her mistress' looks alarmed the faithful domestic. She had nursed Olympia from her birth, and, in a humble way, took a sort of motherly charge of her young lady. With an undefinable fear at heart she hurried her companions along in breathless haste. They had only reached the banks of the Po, when Irene beheld the heavens reflecting the lurid glare of fire.

"Look Zamora! see Angelo! is there not a fire somewhere? See thou, good Angelo, in what direction it is," cried Irene.

"Holy Mother! I hope it is not the Colonna; I cannot forget the lady Olympia's anxious face," muttered Zamora, more to herself than her companions.

Climbing a tree, Angelo obtained a pretty fair view.

"Well, what dost thou see boy?"

"Good monna Zamora, the fire is in the outskirts of the city, but I cannot see the exact place; besides, there are the soldiers either going or coming from the place."

"My heart misgives me; some evil hath befallen my master and his daughter," replied Zamora, gravely.

"Return thou to the via Colonna, and watch, good Angelo; let not thy mistress see thee; should all things be quiet, hasten back to the hermit's cave—thou knowest; speed thee on thine errand boy. God and his saints

defend us! these are evil times we live in," said the old woman, crossing herself, as the page departed. "Come, child, let us mend our pace; the lady Olympia said we were to use all possible speed, and we have lost one half-hour already."

The hermit, who lived in the cave by the river, seldom saw the light of the sun as it rode high in the heavens and sparkled on the rushing waters below his lonely dwelling; he spoke to none, nor did any dream a human being lived in that wild and inaccessible place. Only the sweet song-birds and flowers gladdened the solitary; the soothing sound of the river stilled him into sleep on his mossy couch in the long summer time, or sent its white foam in spray shower over his silvery hair and haggard cheek in winter. It was a wild, rude dwelling for any poor wayworn heart. In the interior of the cave flowed a small stream—in tinkling drops it fell, murmuring its own soft music as it hastened to join the river; while the hides of wild animals, of eastern climes, strewed the floor and walls. In one corner lay a rusting coat of mail, with sword and spear, showing the hermit had been a warrior in his youth; an oaken cabinet stood on the other side; a few seats and a brazier of charcoal completed the simple furniture of the cavern. Only one article seemed out of place in that lonely dwelling—a small ivory painting, the portrait of a beautiful and royal-looking lady, hung upon the wall, in striking contrast to all around. The recluse seemed to regard this relic as of some fair saint; for hours he lay and looked at the beautiful but yet sad face, wistfully stretching out his arms so imploringly towards the portrait, as if to invite the shade of the fair girl to come to him and lift from his heart a weight of grief that seemed too heavy for him to bear; but the portrait only smiled its calm eternal smile of pensive sweetness, and left the root of bitterness with the poor solitary. Deeper and deeper grew the gloom in the cave, and the red embers threw strange weird shadows on the walls; now it would fall on the tiger's head, and light up its glassy eyes with seeming life, until your scared imagination fancied it moved to spring; then the light flashed upon the dropping water, causing it to sparkle in the ruddy glow; then it fell on the wasted form of the hermit, disclosing the deep furrows grief had ploughed in the broad, open brow, and pale the fire in that dark eye ere youth had passed. It was a face that told of great sufferings and hopeless despair. No cowed monk was this recluse; he wore the furred gown of the scholar, but neither cross nor beads hung from his girdle.

A low peculiar cry, repeated thrice in succession, made Emillo start uneasily. Hastily he drew a glittering stiletto into his sleeve, and cautiously approached the entrance of the cave. Again the scream of the owl came nearer, and a rustling among the bushes.

"Who can it be? Colonna was here yester even; is there fresh danger threatened? God forbid!" murmured the hermit. "Heavens! it is a woman—two of them; what evil chance hath brought them here?" As the two figures drew nearer, Emillo's fears subsided. "Reverend Emillo, the lady Olympia sends thee this letter and token," whispered a voice well known to the hermit.

"It is thou, Zamora and Irene—whence come ye?" demanded the recluse hastily and with considerable emotion.

"We were sent to abide here, most noble Con——."

"Silence! the breeze will carry that name to Ferrara!" cried the hermit sternly.

Lighting a taper, Emillo broke the seal and scanned the epistle. A crimson flush mantled his withered cheek, and fire flashed in his dimmed eye.

"Knowest thou, Zamora, that the noble Colonna and his devoted daughter

are in the hands of the Inquisition, and undergoing the torture even now?" cried Emillo, wringing his hands.

"Holy saints! my heart foreboded this—my child, my beautiful child," murmured the old woman, rocking herself in great distress.

"Where is Angelo?"

"We sent him back to learn where the fire was; something struck me it was the house of the Colonna."

"Ah! the infernal miscreants. Hast thou courage girl?" continued the hermit, addressing Irene, "to disguise thyself as a page, and seek the ducal palace. Find out the prison where thy master and lady are confined; slip them this steel saw through the bars, and this written paper. Tell them Emillo will aid them to escape; be cautious, be brave, thou hast serpents to deal with," said the hermit gravely.

"I will try, noble Emillo."

"Good! here are the garments of a page such as the D'Este have; haste thee on thy mission—but stay; I will go with thee; thou shalt be my page—I yet can play the soldier," cried the recluse after some reflection.

CHAPTER XXVII.—TWO ALTERNATIVES.

WHEN Olympia opened her eyes from that long deep swoon, she found herself lying on a bed with a pleasant motherly face bending over her. In the black eyes of the good monna a world of anxious tenderness expressed itself. "Blessed Virgin! she is not dead at all! Oh, madonna! I thought you would never open your eyes on this world again. Are you better?"

"My father! where is he? this is not the council chamber; where is my father? tell me," cried Olympia wildly, starting to her feet.

"Cristi! don't be frightened; you will see your father; the magnificent Signory will permit that—I heard Bernardo say so," said Guillia, Bernardo's mother, soothingly.

"When can I see him? Oh, God! what waking misery is this? why did I ever open my eyes? My poor old father! they have murdered him!" murmured the unhappy girl, clasping her hands and striving to think calmly and coherently. Oh, madonna! help me to save my father! he is very old; you once had a parent; you can feel for me."

"Yes, I will help you; Bernardo will take care of you. Throw this mantilla over your form, lady; you are very young and beautiful to endure so much grief. God prosper you, madonna; come back with my son, and remain with us as long as you like until your father gets free," said Monna Guillia kindly.

Olympia thanked her with tears; the kindness of perfect strangers touched her sensitive heart, burdened as it was with grief. "God reward reward you and your son; if I am permitted to return, I will show you Olympia Colonna is not ungrateful."

Under the protection of her kind friend Bernardo, Olympia again sought the ducal palace. The bells pealed as harshly as they had done before to her tortured ears; from the churches of San Benedetto and Maria del'Angeli they boomed, their iron tongues saying to her heart—"He will die! he will die!"

The Signory had not extracted a full confession from the obstinate sorcerer, Marco Colonna; he had been twice on the rack, but would confess nothing; in truth, he never groaned or showed the least symptoms of pain, and not a word could the Signory get out of him. Since his removal to his cell Colonna had not spoken to anyone—refusing food or wine. A holy priest had been sent to him, but the magician would not hearken to

ghostly consolation. Turning his face to the wall, with a gesture of impatience, he bid the good Father begone.

Among the councillors who had seen the biological miracles performed by Dr. Colonna in the Inquisition were great division and strife; the Signory were divided into two parties; one held the magician as in direct communication with the powers of darkness, and the other half held him as a saint and godly healer, as Saint Francis and the rest of the canonised host. Fierce grew the debate in the council chamber between the two contending factions. The anti-Colonna party was headed by the unprincipled Alfonso D'Este, who decreed the destruction of the old man in order to secure Olympia. He meant to play the part of a friend to the unfortunate lady by seeming to show mercy to her father when he most intended mischief. To rouse Olympia's gratitude was his aim, so that when her father was out of the way he would be better able to work out his own base ends. Sternly and doggedly the Duke declared Colonna should die, and at the stake. "Burn the vile heretic! he hath forsaken God and the Church! had he a hundred lives he shall lose them all! I have willed it."

"Noble Duke, let the old man have one chance to live; he hath seen seventy years, and cannot trouble the State much more; besides, Marco Colonna, if he hath more than mortal power, has never exercised it for any evil, but, as we all know, hath saved many lives and fed the poor. He hath not sought his own worldly advancement, nor for a place of distinction in the council. Most illustrious Prince, his greatest enemies admit that——"

"Proceed with your eulogium on Saint Colonna!" sneered Alfonso; the Signory are ravished, my Rodolpho.

"Stung by the words of his sovereign, Rodolpho took up the defence of Colonna more warmly.

"I would spare the life of the father on one condition," interposed an old noble of the house of Rimini, coming to the rescue of his intemperate kinsman.

"What! does the Rimini plead for a Colonna and a sorcerer?" cried D'Este with withering scorn.

With disdain equal to his own Rimini said, "Be pleased to hear me, my Lord Duke. There are two felons to be executed at sunset: let a cup of their blood be filled to the brim and given to the lady Olympia to drink, and let that draught buy her father's life. Cause her to drink it in the presence of the sorcerer. If she be a witch, human blood will cause her to swell up as if she had the black death, and if she be a true maiden nothing will befall her." Shouts of approval followed this suggestion.

"Send for the witch and let the trial be made; let the slaves be executed now—an hour or two cannot make much difference to them in eternity!" cried the Duke.

The fearful order was quickly obeyed—a large goblet of blood was brought and laid before Alfonso.

"Bring the old infidel before us; let us see whether his paternal heart will accept life at such a price!" cried D'Este, stirring the horrible contents with his dagger.

Literally carried between two familiars, Dr. Colonna was borne before the Signory. The scholar could not stand without support; in vain he exerted his little remaining strength to support himself on his staff alone—nature failed, and for once his strong will forsook him. Poor old man! his long white beard and silvery locks were matted with blood, his robe was torn, and the velvet cap he usually wore was gone; no covering had the reverend head but its own purity and innocence, and that could not save him from the rough jeers and rougher blows of his cowardly enemies.

"Bring a seat for the old heathen! his master the devil has given him

over!" said the Duke, pointing at his victim. "Marco Colonna, it hath pleased the noble Signory to treat thee with clemency far exceeding thy deserts. The illustrious Count di Rimini, whose wisdom is boundless, hath made a suggestion which we have approved of, and give thee, on the condition that thy daughter drink this cup of blood, thy life and freedom. Hear it then, old man; dost thy heart fail thee at the prospect of making thy child's witchcraft known to the public; for if she be possessed of the devil, she will become black and die at thy feet!"

Sighing deeply, Dr. Colonna said faintly, "My Lord Duke, the life you confer I value not; my work is finished; God hath no more for me to do. Spare my innocent child so terrible an ordeal; you had a sister and a mother—feel for my poor fatherless daughter for their sake!" Two big tears fell slowly down the thin cheeks of the poor heart-broken father. "Spare my child, noble Duke; spare my poor unhappy daughter!" murmured Colonna sadly.

The sufferings of their victim failed to move the iron-hearted men who sat in judgment on him.

"Noble Olympia! what evil hath befallen thee?" asked a soldier, whose closely-barred helmet concealed his face. Colonna's daughter was on her way to the council chamber, accompanied by Bernardo. The voice caused her to start—well she knew it; and her own ring, she had given Zamora for a token, convinced her she was addressed by Emillo the hermit.

"Dear friend, be cautious; thy life is precious," said Colonna's daughter.

"Fear not, sweet Olympia. Canst thou direct me to thy father's prison? I will help him to escape."

"It is by the moat under the eastern tower."

"Enough; I have cause to remember it! They have let thee free, dear sister; I heard the people talking of it in the palace; they blame the Signory as much as slaves dare. Adieu, madonna; we must not be seen conversing."

So saying, the soldier hermit disappeared in the crowd, and Olympia sought the dread secret council chamber. Only one object did the heroic girl see 'mid the assembled throng—an old man sitting on a bench supporting his chin on his staff. The prayer for mercy was still on his lips when Olympia entered. One bound brought her to his feet.

"My father! my father! I am come to save you! Oh, God! there is blood on your hair and on your robe!" cried she, starting to her feet in horror. "Accursed demons! sated with the blood and spoils of the innocent! how dared you spill the blood of an old man? Could not the blamelessness of his life and his grey hairs save him from the rack? Oh, merciless and inhuman men! how will ye look for mercy at the day of judgment, when ye murder the innocent for amusement, and laugh at their agony?" The fierce burst of passion gave way to indignant grief. Drawing her father to her breast, the vaulted roof echoed back her heart-breaking sobs. Vainly the physician's trembling hands smoothed the golden head, and whispered hopes he shared not.

"Olympia, beloved! fear not; we shall meet soon," whispered the heart-broken parent, thinking of the terrible ordeal about to be offered.

CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE ORDEAL.

OLYMPIA was not permitted long to indulge her grief. Alfonso, ever brutal and coarse, gruffly bade her be silent, and listen to what he had to say. Her words had stung his soul. Well he knew there was not a shadow of

truth in the accusations brought against Colonna or herself, nor were there justice in their trial.

"Olympia Colonna, the Signory have offered to grant yonder old heretic's life, on one condition, and to the noble Rimini thou art indebted. The world grows holy when a Rimini begs mercy for a Colonna," sneered D'Este.

During this address Olympia slowly raised her head from her father's shoulder, casting one tearful, grateful look upon Count Rimini, the ancient enemy of her house; but his eyes fell before the pure, bright glance in confusion.

"We approve of the condition, seeing it will save thy father's life, and proclaim thee innocent of the foul charge of witchcraft. Thou seest this goblet?" Olympia bowed; she imagined it contained poison; her father would be saved, and that was better than life. Leaving the old man's embrace, as he whispered "Touch it not," she held out her hand for the goblet, which the Duke handed her, saying, "Take it, and drink the heart's blood of two malefactors! Praise God and the Virgin it is no worse! the bodies were not diseased, we understand."

Great heavens! how her heart throbbed and sank within as she took the disgusting draught in her hands! Turning her eyes on the Duke with scorn, she said "Thanks, my Lord Duke! in this cup I will pledge you! Olympia Colonna shrinks not from the trial that was to save a parent's life! only keep faith with me, My Lord of Rimini, let the strife between our houses be drowned in this bowl," said the brave girl, turning to the old courtier; and ere her father could interpose, she drained the goblet to the bottom! "Your promise, my Lord Duke—my father's life! loosen his fetters! oh, quick, my Lord Duke—have pity!" cried Olympia in agony, kneeling before the savage.

Her father spoke not, but raised his eyes to heaven, while tears streamed down his pallid cheeks. That his beautiful and delicate child should quaff human gore for his life, overwhelmed his feeble strength; he could only pray for her. Surely heaven heard that silent petition!

The imploring eyes and voice of Olympia died away—no response was made to the appeal; a mocking laugh crushed her rising hopes, and bruised her heart afresh. The Grand Inquisitor rose up, ordering her sternly to keep back. "Listen, thou fiend in woman's shape! God and man keep no faith with heretics. Darest thou seek the life of thy apostate sire? No; had he a hundred lives, they were not enough to pay the price of his vile heresy; ere the sunset he shall be in eternal perdition! The stake is ready, and the faggots prepared! On the site of his house, wherein he practised his infernal arts, shall he suffer! And thou, Olympia Colonna, in consideration of thy youth, shalt get thee to the Convent of the Pillar, and expiate thy crimes by scourging and fasting, so that by years of humiliation and prayer thou may'st be saved. The Church grieves over thee, and fain would receive thee into its bosom!"

Were they men or incarnate devils who sanctioned such acts? Wildly she clasped her father closer to her agonised heart; his maimed arms encircled her, and the feeble tongue blessed her, but how faintly the loved voice came on her ear.

"Beloved child, God will raise up friends to thee, for I—am dying; fear not. This feeble body—will—feel no pain. Turn thy face to me—that my fading sight—may—rest—on—thee. Father!—shield—her—when I am—am——"

Colonna's head fell on her neck, and his arms relaxed their embrace. The prayer was answered, but Olympia was at the mercy of her foes, and the pure spirit of Marco Colonna had fled from earth.

"God help me now! Oh, my Father! take your child; leave me not to worse than death!" Wildly she kissed the cold lips and dimmed eye that would never smile or bless her again.

Rudely the familiars pushed her aside, and lifted the body of Colonna, tearing off his robes before her, and substituting black serge ones, covered over with hideous devils painted in yellow. Cutting off his snowy beard, and placing on his head a yellow cap something like a mitre, they seized the old scholar's lifeless remains, and ascended the steps to the hall of the palace.

Meantime, Olympia, who neither wept nor fainted, was borne along with the crowd in the direction of her old home. How the people yelled as they beheld the body thrown into the waggon!

"Burn the sorcerer; impale him—he is not dead! burn the wizard! bring pitch and oil—let the fire be fierce and hot!" so the mob yelled. 'Twas well the good old man heard them not. Denser and denser grew the multitude; the soldiers could scarcely keep them from tearing the body out of the cart, and rending it in pieces. The witch mania was in full force in those days. On, on they went, crushing little children and women in their eagerness to see the burning, and watch the body blacken and char into ashes! Men left their pursuits in the city; the minds of the people craved for such spectacles, and the priests took care they should be satisfied. The black mantilla fell from Olympia's shoulders, and her white robes were soiled and torn; she would have been instantly crushed under foot but for the friendly aid of the soldier in the barred visor, who lifted her upon his steed before him and rode off.

CHAPTER XXIX.—THE AUTO DA FE OF DR. COLONNA'S BONES

In the centre of the still smouldering ruins a large space was cleared, into which the stake was driven, and the faggots piled high around it, plentifully supplied with pitch and other inflammable bodies to make a bright blaze. Everybody laboured under the belief that the sorcerer was not dead—that nothing but fire could kill him; even the priests, and Inquisitors who had seen the noble old man yield up his spirit before them, thought it was only another exhibition of his diabolical skill, and should they deliver up his body to his friends, by some means the magician would come alive again, and give them more trouble than ever, and they become a laughing stock among the nations! Amid the ruins of his once happy home the shattered and mutilated remains of the reverend sage were brought to be consumed. With difficulty the soldiers kept the people back; every tree and pillar was laden with a freight of human beings yelling and hooting—hoarse with cursing. The muffled drums of the guard were heard, then came the waggon with the victim's body—in savage mockery the executioner had propped the corpse into a sitting posture, holding a crucifix in its stiffening grasp; the glazed eyes glared horribly on the crowd, who were appalled into silence by the ghastly sight. The waggon was followed by a train of monks who muttered anathemas on the dead—consigning, by the Pope's authority, the soul of Marco Colonna to eternal perdition, and his body to the flames! When the procession reached the place of execution Colonna was lifted from the cart, and chained to the stake, but from the greenness of the wood the flame would not catch. This incident was of course attributed to the wicked old sorcerer, sitting so stern and grim in the midst. Holy water was brought, and the sacred wafer, besides the Bible and a piece of the true cross. The monks chanted, and cursed by turns the magician, in the name of the Pope and the crucified Son. For a long time these potent

spells were unavailing, the fire refused to burn, and the struggle between the Church and the magician was long and doubtful. There sat Colonna in his painted robes, triumphing over his enemies even in death. Still clutching the crucifix, the physician seemed some terrible enchanter, who could say to the devouring element "Thus far shalt thou come!" The contest between the Pope and the devil at length ended in favour of the successor of St. Peter, as it always is said to have ended in days of old. The fire waxed stronger and stronger, until the executioner and familiars were compelled to stand back from the intense heat; the flames reached Dr. Colonna; his lower extremities were blackened and charred; the hand which held the cross burned first, and then the smoke surrounded him as with a veil, hiding him from sight.

Hours after, when the people dispersed, the executioner collected the ashes of Colonna, and threw them into the Po.

Strict search was made for the magician's daughter; she had disappeared none knew whither; a reward was offered by the Duke to any person who would bring her to him alive, or give such information as would lead to her discovery. How she had escaped was a miracle to every one. Alfonso was enraged and disappointed at losing so fair a prize. "If Olympia Colonna be not a witch, I am ready to renounce my hopes of salvation!" said Alfonso, stamping with rage.

"My Lord Duke, these witches have been known to vanish into thin air, and so elude pursuit! doubtless, this woman hath done something of the sort!" said the Grand Inquisitor solemnly. "They tell me the pestilent heretic kept the fire under for two hours, and had it not been for a piece of the holy tree the monks brought, he would have escaped! Ferrara is well rid of such an evil sorcerer."

"Ah! indeed my Lord Prelate, we live in terrible times."

CHAPTER XXX.—FLIGHT.

MONTHS flew by; and in the many exciting changes that were taking place in Ferrara, in fact all over Italy, the horrors of the execution of Dr. Colonna began to fade from the public mind. Many other victims had been slaughtered on one pretext or another since. The name of Colonna was seldom mentioned in Ferrara, save in fear and trembling. No trace of Olympia was found; she was never seen or heard of more; every monk and layman believed firmly she was a witch, and cursed her name and memory accordingly.

In the sequestered cave on the banks of the river three human beings lived, fearing discovery and death every hour. Beautiful summer had waned into mellow autumn; still they lived on in the cave. On the couch that had been used by the hermit reclined a young girl worn to a shadow; the oval cheek was wasted and pinched; over the pale, broad brow the blue veins wandered, painfully transparent; her large dark eyes were lighted with unnatural fire; no tears ever dimmed or quenched their burning light; the grief that had dried the fountain of her young life was too deep and tragic—it had blasted her heart, as the lightning scathes the oak in the forest.

"Sweet child! do you feel easier?" asked the recluse, bending over the girl and stroking the golden hair.

"I would be ungrateful and cold if I did not, good Emillo; and yet——"

"And yet—what? my Olympia, what can I do for thee?"

"Nay, brother in suffering, forgive me; I wished I had never opened mine eyes again from that death-faint, when——"

"Hush, hush, my sister; think not on the past! God has been pleased to spare you to me, that I might repay a small part of my deep debt to thee. Thou hast yet something to do in this sad world; the hopes that brightened thy life hath been blighted; but Olympia, mia, there is the consolation that the discharge of good deeds will bring thee; man still needs thy ministering care, and thou who are so great a healer will not withhold thy gifts from him. Dear Olympia, think me not hard and unfeeling in speaking so; could any one act of my life—nay, could my life afford thee an hour's happiness, it is thine," said the hermit in a tremulous voice.

"Forgive me, Emillo; grief hath made me selfish." The young girl raised his hand to her lips.

"Thou knowest, Olympia, thy father was the friend of the great Abas; he lived at the Persian Court many years; let us quit this accursed land, and seek the protection of the Shah. For the sake of thy father, the eastern monarch will protect his daughter; shall it be so, dear Olympia?"

"Yes, we will go; I will enter the temple as a priestess, and spend the remainder of my years in its sacred precincts; as far as my humble knowledge and power serves me, I will devote myself to the furtherance of the science; I promised to my dear father I would, and he approved my choice."

"Noble daughter of a noble sire! I commend thy resolution; we will seek the great Shah—fortunately, I have the signet ring he bestowed upon thy father; that will ensure us his protection," said Emillo. "What sayest thou, Olympia, mia? We must escape to Venice, and take the galleys to Constantinople."

"Arrange it as you like, dear Emillo, so that we leave this wicked Ferrara."

"Hast thou strength sufficient to make a journey by foot as a pilgrim to Venice?"

"Yes."

Three months later saw the fugitives on their way to Constantinople. Disguised as monks, they sought an asylum in the Turkish capital, until an opportunity presented itself for going to Jerusalem, in company with a band of pilgrims who were visiting shrines, anxious to see the Holy Sepulchre before returning to their native lands. The way was long and dangerous, but fortune favoured their enterprise. After much trouble and privations, Olympia and Emillo found themselves at Jerusalem, partaking of the hospitality of the monks of the Armenian Convent. The simple brethren welcomed the wayworn travellers cordially, inviting them to remain with them; and as the journey from Constantinople to Jerusalem taxed Olympia's strength sorely, gratefully she availed herself of the good monks' invitation to rest until her strength was fully established. They compassionated the weakness and languor of the delicate page, who attended so faithfully upon his master.

"Rest here, good youth, as long as thou and thy master can; the journey from this to Ispahan is long and dangerous, though travellers tell me the perils are much diminished since Shah Abas ascended the throne; he hath thrown bridges across all the rivers for the convenience of his people," said the communicative monk, pointing out the various interesting sites to Olympia and Emillo. "This palace, noble stranger, is the house Pilate lived in, and there is the room in which our Blessed Lord was confined before his trial," cried the priest, pointing to a dark room. "Under yonder ruinous arch He stood until the judge exclaimed, 'Behold the man!' Holy Virgin, forgive them."

"There hath ever been martyrs—the good, the upright, and innocent have ever been the victims of man's hate," replied Emillo sadly, his thoughts reverting to the past.

Brother Boniface, little guessing the nature of the stranger's gravity, went on: "Near to this palace stands the gateway to Calvary—now, you can see it." Moving a little farther, their guide pointed to the spot where Christ fainted under the weight of his cross. "'Twas here the Blessed Mother swooned to see her Son brought into the power of his enemies. In the monastery is the handkerchief with which St. Veronica wiped the sweat from off His divine face. Blessed Mother, intercede for us," exclaimed the pious Armenian, crossing himself.

Sick at heart as Olympia was, she felt interested in what the good monk told her. Her religion had not been the religion of the Church, but the religion of philosophy; to her the Man of Nazareth was only the son of Mary and Joseph—the great moral teacher and ruler; that he died for the salvation of a guilty world she did not believe. Olympia considered Christ as a martyr to truth; she admired the simple purity of his life and doctrines, and in her own life tried to follow up the golden rule He laid down; but this Italian girl did not believe in the divinity of the Man of Sorrows. Her father had held the same opinions, and his daughter inherited them.

The Holy Sepulchre was the next place of interest to Olympia and her companion. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre has the appearance of a Roman Catholic Church; the interior is divided into two parts, and in the ante-chapel is shown the mouth of what is called the Sepulchre, and the stone whereon the angel sat—this is a block of white marble. On the floor of the entrance hall, the monk showed them the stone of unction, where the body of Christ was washed, and anointed for his burial. This sacred stone is covered by a slab of polished marble; a low rail protects it, and rich lamps are suspended over it. As Olympia and Emillo entered, hundreds of pilgrims were approaching on their knees, and reverentially kissing and touching it, offering up their devotions with fervour, thanking God for permitting them to see the holy place.

With a feeling of pity the Italian girl turned away, constraining herself to pay reverence and adoration where she felt none. Brother Boniface fell prostrate, uttering many Aves; and Olympia felt relieved when they returned to the convent; so many people worshipping mere stones pained her.

CHAPTER XXXI.—SHAH ABAS.

IN their five months sojourn in the Armenian convent, Olympia and her companion had ample time to explore and see all the objects of interest in and around Jerusalem. The summer was come and over—travellers were anxious to reach their destination before another winter should overtake them in the Syrian desert. The journey lying before them was fraught with much peril and danger, on account of the unsettled state of affairs between Achmet I. and the great Abas, a prince of much power and extraordinary sagacity.

This distinguished hero in a short time compelled the Turcomans and Georgians to obedience; took advantage of the troubled state of the Turkish Sultan's government at home to regain all those provinces of which Persia had been stripped by Ottoman Sultans. Tauris was already in the hands of the victorious Persians, when Achmet, then little more than fifteen years old, appointed Cicala, son of the subjugator of Assyria, to lead his armies through the deserts that had been so fatal to their predecessors.

In one month Cicala sustained three defeats, with difficulty keeping on the field—encouraged by the Ulama that the death of one Persian was of more importance in the sight of Allah than sixty Christians. This declaration coming to the ears of Abas, so enraged him that he put to death with the cruellest torture every member of the Ulama who fell into his hands.

Bagdad and Irak again fell into the hands of the Shah; Cicala was obliged to take safety in flight, leaving all his baggage, camp, and artillery to his enemies, besides losing thirty thousand troops.

With a generosity rarely to be found in eastern monarchs, Abas sued for peace, although he had been in every engagement victorious. The better to overcome the scruples of Achmet, Abas accompanied his overtures of peace with splendid presents, expressing his willingness that a Cadec, sent from Constantinople, should dispense justice, engaging at the same time to pay two hundred bales of silk as a yearly tribute. Peace was at length concluded, and a war that had lasted for a hundred and fifty years brought to an end, having laid waste some of the most beautiful regions and fertile valleys on the earth.

It was about this time that Olympia Colonna arrived at Jerusalem, on her way to Ispahan, to seek a refuge from persecution under the protection of this powerful monarch. From Jerusalem they travelled in caravans to Damascus, experiencing the usual miseries and inconveniencies incidental to such a mode of transportation. Habited again in the dress of an Italian gentlewoman, Olympia was glad to reach Persia—for the terrible events of the last eighteen months of her life had changed the bright joyous girl into a careworn woman, stripping her heart of its love and poetry, and casting a deep and lifelong shadow on her life. The pure and devoted affection that had subsisted between Olympia and her father had filled up every want in her heart; no other object claimed her thoughts; her father and her books were her only joy. The quiet and poetic repose of her childhood had developed the dreamy girl into an inspired and radiant woman. No doubt, Olympia's clairvoyant powers were fostered and encouraged by the life of study and reflection, as well as a natural tendency of her own organisation and temperament. This gift cemented the bonds of affection still more closely between Olympia and her father; enabling, as it did, Colonna to perform many wonderful cures through this lucidity of his daughter. The intolerance of the age in which they lived thought it an evil spirit that had entered into a beautiful woman for the purpose of ensnaring and destroying the human race. The Inquisition had dragged her noble father before its dread tribunal, where he had yielded up his life. The shock which these horrors gave the daughter of the scholar had been almost too much for her; the sunshine was crushed out of her heart when she saw that silvery head droop and die in the dungeon.

No longer dimpling smiles hovered round the sweet mouth of Olympia. The light of love fled from her eyes, and the delicate hue from her cheek; the shadow of great grief clouded that glorious beauty, and weary sadness lay ever on her soul. Olympia was weary of life; her heart was in another sphere, and ever pined for the venerable sire; visions of that pale face, so heartrending in its voiceless agony, haunted her waking and sleeping hours. Tears for the first time dim the pilgrim's eyes since the terrible day she drank the draught she fondly thought would set her parent free. There was none to soothe or sympathise; none to whisper hope of better days—in the desert there are none so dreary as that desolate-hearted daughter; there was nothing for Olympia to love or live for; only her own sorrows and memories were left. Poor Olympia!

The stay at Damascus was brief—neither Emillo nor his companion cared to linger. Fortunately, a caravan was starting for Bagdad two days after their arrival in Damascus; though weary and greatly prostrated in health, Olympia persisted in resuming her journey. Abas had again returned to Ispahan, after concluding an advantageous peace with Achmet, who had returned to Constantinople.

To Olympia this long journey had no interest or pleasure; she spoke to

none, but remained in her litter all the day; and when the camels were unloaded for the night, Emillo with watchful care erected his tent, and with his own hands brought her the frugal evening meal, consisting often of dates, a little bread, and water or milk, as the case might be.

Emillo was the best and kindest of companions; her every want was anticipated, and if possible gratified. Often tears would fill the poor girl's eyes, and her thanks more than repaid Emillo for any little service he did for the quiet and patient, but changed Olympia of other days!

CHAPTER XXXII.—ISPAHAN.

BRIGHTLY the rays of the setting sun gleamed on the gilded towers and minarets of Cheh el Selom, and the muezzin call to prayer was heard from every house-top, when the caravan from Bagdad approached the city gates, carrying the two pilgrims from Italy. Through the beautiful avenues the sunlight streamed in a green and golden glory. People hurried to and fro in the broad handsome streets, shaded from the heat by the trees the great Abas had planted. Weary travellers slaked their thirst at the public fountains, and blessed God's prophet for giving so good a monarch to Persia. Many strangers, and ambassadors from every kingdom in Europe, resorted to the Court of the great Shah, not only on business, but to behold the splendour and wealth of the Persian capital.

Weary and utterly worn out with the fatigues of so arduous a journey, Olympia and Emillo were not insensible to the sweets of repose, nor of the beauties of the city into which they had come. A week after their arrival the festival of the Scattering of the Roses was to take place. Fragrant odours of freshly culled flowers soothed and refreshed Olympia's spirit; there was something so pure in the musky incense of the roses, they breathed peace and hope into that sad and lonely heart.

Conducted by a faithful camel driver, Emillo and Colonna's daughter put up at one of the many caravanseries that abounded in Ispahan, until they were sufficiently rested to seek an interview with Shah Abas.

"Olympia, mia, let us look round this city ere we part for ever," said Emillo, softly stroking the golden hair that now no longer rolled in shining tresses round that sweet face, but was simply braided off, revealing the classic proportions of her antique head.

"To part, Emillo?"

"Aye, Olympia, to part! we have seen much, and suffered much; the world is nothing to us now. When once under the protection of the king, I will seek a place where, far from mortal eye, I may spend the rest of my short life alone," said her friend, gravely.

"Oh, Emillo! I did not dream of this!" cried Olympia, much moved.

"Dear child! what can Adrian Urbino do for thee? the temple Cheh el Selom will hide thee for ever from my sight; thou shalt be a pure priestess, ministering to the wants of others, and it is well and fitting that thou should be so protected that thy dangerous beauty may not bring sorrow on thee. Olympia, thou art too pure and radiant for this hard world—let them adore thee as some sweet saint. I am glad thou shalt be safe; and may'st thou find consolation in the discharge of those holy avocations thou art so well fitted for. For me, the sands of life are ebbing fast; should I have strength to return to Jerusalem, I will pass the rest of my time on earth in the hermitage that stands on Little Lebanon, praying for thee, and for the time to pass quickly until I am re-united in heaven to my murdered wife!"

Neither spoke for several minutes; at length Olympia said, in a voice she tried to keep steady, "Go! noble, devoted Adrian! we shall pray for

that heavenly re-union that is promised to them that believe; we shall all shortly meet before the great white throne of Allah; he shall dry our tears, and give us joy for our earth sorrows!"

Many days had not elapsed before the Persian monarch was made acquainted with the arrival of the Italian fugitives. The ring he had given to Marco Colonna years before obtained for his daughter a ready access and gracious reception.

"Wonderful child of a wonderful father! command us to the half of our kingdom!" said Abas, struck with the beauty and misfortunes of Olympia.

Neither wealth nor distinction did the gentle stranger wish; with modest timidity she preferred her request to the king. "Great king! my father often spoke of your majesty in our Italian home; he said you were the protector of the suffering and the stranger; that none who ever sought your aid, sought it in vain. Noble Shah! at my father's wish, I come from Italy to sue for a humble place in the temple as a servant," said Olympia, kneeling at the monarch's feet.

Stepping down from his throne, Abas raised the maiden. "Noble daughter of an illustrious sire! Abas will grant thy request; thou hast come as comes the rain in the dry season; the temple has lost its priestess, and thou, daughter of a far-off land, shall minister in her place; the prophecy has been fulfilled, there should come a priestess from the west that would speak truth and wisdom to the Persians."

When the snow had descended on Lebanon for the second time, the soft flakes fell upon the rigid face of the hermit, Emillo. On his bosom lay the miniature of the Princess Bianca, frozen to his constant heart; and they who were so cruelly divided on earth, are not divided now.

STRANGE PRESENTIMENT.

AN inquest has been held upon the body of Samuel Tinley, miner, who was killed in a pit at James Bridge, Walsall. As deceased was "setting a tree," a quantity of rock fell from the roof of a pit and fractured his skull. The jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death." In the course of the evidence, it was stated that during the night preceding the accident, deceased awoke his wife and told her he felt a ton weight of rock upon his head. She endeavoured to persuade him that it was headache, but he was quite free from that complaint. He said he could not sleep, and requested his wife to place their only child beside him. In the morning he appeared very reluctant to go to work, and on his wife reminding him that he would be late if he did not make haste, he went to the bedside where the child lay, and said, "Let me have my last kiss." But strange though this may appear, it is by no means the most singular incident connected with the melancholy affair. It appears that deceased has a cousin—also a miner—between whom and deceased there had always existed a more than ordinary friendship, and that this cousin, who had been in the night-shift in a neighbouring pit, and was returning home, and just about the moment the accident occurred, he saw the deceased standing before him in

the highway. So struck was he with this strange occurrence, that he hastened towards deceased's house, there to receive the melancholy confirmation of the doubts raised in his mind by the apparition he had seen. In this locality miners have had presentiments of their fate. Not very long ago a miner, who resided at Bloxwich, went to his work, but when about half-way to the pit, which was about a mile and a-half or two miles from home, he had a presentiment that he would that morning be killed. He returned home, and requested his wife to assemble the children, and when this was done he read a chapter of the Bible, and then engaged in prayer. He then took farewell of his wife and children, and having done so went to his work, but had not been at work many minutes when he was killed on the spot by a fall of rock. The above facts came out in evidence at the inquest which was held upon the body.—*Liverpool Courier*.