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STORIES ABOUT IDIOTS.

BY

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AND

CIRCULATED FOR BENEFIT OF LARBERT SCHOOL FOR IDIOTS.

"An heir of glory, a frail child of dust,
Helpless immortal, insect infinite—
A worm, a god."—*Young.*

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MEMORANDUM.

THESE "Stories about Idiots," which have appeared from time to time in the *Dumfries Courier*, have been written with no literary or artistic aim. The objects in view have been to direct public sympathy and benevolence to a numerous class of sufferers living amongst us, but whose condition has as yet attracted little attention or assistance; to show that these unfortunate beings are endowed with various tendencies and capacities which, according to surrounding circumstances and influences, may be turned to good or to evil; and humbly and indirectly to suggest that it is an imperative Christian duty as well as a social privilege to extend to these rudimentary fellow-men the protection and culture and consequent happiness which science and humanity have pointed out as applicable to such cases, and as contributing to raise the dwarfed and feeble intellect and conscience nearer to our own standard of strength and responsibility. It is necessary to add that these narratives, though composite, are strictly and literally true, that every statement is a verified fact, although not always connected with the individual of whom it is related, that even the scenery is pictured by an eye-witness, and that each tale may be accepted as concrete and typical. Where the subject was beyond the reach of personal observation the authorities depended upon were found in the Reports of Public Boards, Schools, and Asylums; Fodéré's "Traité du Goitre"; Annales Medico Psychologiques; Michel "Sur Les Races Maudits"; Biographical Dictionaries, &c.

W. A. F. B.

STORIES ABOUT IDIOTS.

I.

THE CAT'S RAPHAEL.

"AN INSPIRED IDIOT."—*Samuel Johnson's description of Oliver Goldsmith.*

THERE were two follies committed. In the first place I was foolish in going without a guide in that independent and adventurous spirit which is a relic and a shadow from the hunting and predaceous stage of our race ; in the second place it was foolish in the host and hostess and all their councillors of the little Inn of Andmatt to affirm that the road was straight and easily traced, that the pass to the other side was easy, and free from snow, that the weather could not change, and that none but a snow blind man could miss the way. Thus encouraged I started upon a cold, steel-grey forenoon in October, as bold and confident as a traveller can be with the thermometer at 32° and going down, and almost beginning to dream and sniff over the hot supper which would greet my arrival at the Auberge, which was to be the limit of my day's journey, even before I had swallowed the goutte of Kirschwasser on the threshold. My route at first lay between woods of beech and pine, and then it wound tortuously among hills of moderate height and through glens of moderate depth, but gradually it passed into a mountain land ever ascending and presenting jagged and snow-covered peaks, which caught the sun whose rays could not reach me, and upon whose skirts every beech and birch had dwindled to a bush, and the mosses and lichens began to cling like hoar frost from the twigs of the rock fir which nodded above me. After noon the cold became intense, the tiny pools in the ruts and footmarks began to freeze, and I noticed that not only the ears of the shaggy pony which carried me merrily along were powdered with delicate flower-like icicles, but that the heated breath

which he snorted forth became dense and cloudy, and then fell in miniature flakes before him. But the track was distinct. The animal seemed to know his way, and I sang so loudly as not merely to awaken a hundred echoes but to shake and detach many a stone from the moraine above. Then snow began to fall, at first slowly, gracefully, almost solemnly, then so quickly and abundantly as to cover all that had been bleak and black and stone and rock in one smooth uniform shroud. At first a ray of sunshine gleamed for a moment over the white unrippled field which extended far before, or glowed on crimson spots in the crevices far up almost in mid-air; but speedily all this illumination and companionship ceased, and all was gloom and gloaming and solitude. The flakes fell heavily and drifted along, but I still felt animated by the pulse of resistance, the awe of uncertainty, and urged my rather laggard steed forward more in hope than in fear of the consequences. Already the depth of snow was considerable, wreaths curved like snow-waves on every side, and the storm was evidently increasing, when, before night-fall, I entered a wide but profound valley, the sides of which were formed of Alps perhaps 10,000 feet in height, bare and barren, or only dotted here and there with stunted trees, down the bottom of which struggled a shallow stream, now half ice bound, but ultimately losing itself in extensive marshes towards the opening in the lower range of hills. The light was fading rapidly, but although I could no longer distinguish the path I saw before me a dark object slowly moving in the direction in which I supposed I was called upon to proceed. Notwithstanding the cautious pace of my horse, the round frozen balls in his hoofs, and the masses of snow into which he ever and anon sunk, we gradually approached what, if not a man, must be a living creature, when suddenly the motion ceased, the dark object disappeared, and I was left to wonder whether a cottage or a cleft in the rock had baffled our pursuit. After struggling for some time my doubts were solved by seeing the supposed phantom prostrate and grovelling in the snow at the bottom of one of those picturesque wayside shrines which beguile, if they do not sanctify, the steps of the weary traveller in the Catholic Cantons of Switzerland. It stood at the junction of a smaller lateral

glen with that vast hollow which I had been traversing, and might mark the passage of Alpine roads now concealed beneath the accumulating snow ; it might commemorate some savage murder or miraculous escape ; or merely remind the passer-by of a Crucified Redeemer ; but whatever its use or purpose, there lay before it the being whom I had attempted to reach, murmuring some inaudible or imperfect words, indifferent to my presence, my impatience, and my shouts. At length, and oh ! how long his devotions seemed, he arose, for he had the semblance of a human being, and without looking towards me or giving the slightest attention to my questions and appeals, he diverged into the smaller valley which I should have conceived it rash and perilous to enter. It was mere self-preservation to follow my newly found companion, as, although he would not speak, nor look, nor laugh, and toiled onward as if alone, he must have a roof, a fireside, and homely friends, any or all of which would have been very acceptable at that moment, as I had no conception where I was or where my route might lie.

My involuntary guide was a queer roundabout manikin, with a large pyramidal head, thatched with long masses of hair, an oval face, small round eyes, widely separated, a short squat body with a vast paunch, resting upon dwarfish legs which almost described semi-circles. His chin was globular, but unbearded, his thumbs and fingers were rounded knobs, and in front of his throat and pendulous over his breast hung a tumour of more life-like colour than his sallow cheeks. As he toiled laboriously through the snow, sometimes plunging out of sight, I tried to persuade him to mount *en croupe*, but he floundered on regardless of me and the obstacles which opposed him. I noticed that when a tree lying across the path obstructed him he kicked violently on the trunk, but instead of stepping over it, as my horse had the wit to do, he went round it. Slowly he clambered up a slope where the ascent was comparatively easy, as the wind had swept the falling snow into the lower parts of the valley, and after a long and difficult effort we approached what was certainly a human habitation, but now sharing in the white covering of all around, appeared to be nothing more than a mound upon the mountain side. Dogs barked—I never listen-

ed to so cheering a sound—goats bleated, cows lowed, figures were passing to and fro, faces appeared at the open door, and it really was a bustling scene ; but my precursor took little or no notice of the noise or the mirth ; he did not even shake off the snow in which he was now sheeted, but pushed his way uncourteously into the house and disappeared. I now stood upon a small plateau in front of a dwelling of considerable size, differing in structure and semblance from the pretty chip toys to be found in our shops, and the picturesque cottages which figure in albums as representing Swiss houses, but still possessing many of the features by which these are recognised. For about three or four feet from the ground the walls were formed of rough stones and cement, the rest was of wood ; there was the invariable verandah in front, the open balcony to reach the upper storey, the projecting pent-house roofs from which dangled dried herbs and perhaps witch charms ; and all round were grouped sheds, out-houses, heaps of firewood, the diminutive coils of withered grass for the cattle, and doubtless ancestral dung-hills, now beautifully concealed by their winter mantle. Into these offices and the main building busy herdsmen and maidens were carrying cheeses, half-frozen butter and milk, or transferring additions of hay crop from hurdles, which had been drawn partly by themselves and partly by very small and demure ponies to the base of the few trees which sheltered the place from the north, and there piled the precious store until it obtained the form of a cone and reached the lower branches. These industrious folks had just arrived from the chalets in the remote and higher parts of this pasture farm. Though vastly weather-wise, and calculating upon a premature winter, they had been surprised by the snow-fall, and hurried down, bringing with them not only their flocks, but the autumn produce of their dairy and the scanty herbage which they had cut, or rather scraped, from the few slopes that still remained green. At length the bustle somewhat subsided, the pigs and other four-footed travellers had been safely housed in a large stable adjoining, and, I suspect, opening into the sitting-room of the family. The valuable contents of the hurdles had been placed in safety, when a man, who proved to be the master of the house, ap-

proached with a military salute and in very good French tendered a thousand excuses and explanations for unkindness and inhospitality. I was then assisted, or rather pulled, from my saddle, and on it being discovered that my horse belonged to the Canton he was ushered in, doubtless much to his own satisfaction, to the society of all the cattle belonging to the establishment, while I, after being stripped of the snow-drift, was led into a cheerful apartment, where around a huge fire of pine roots there moved about members of the family and servants engaged in cooking, thawing their garments, and in various operations which I could not understand, and there, as I too sought the warmth, lay stretched upon the hearth the taciturn dwarf who had unconsciously extricated me from my difficulties. He regarded those around with as little interest as he had bestowed upon me, but fondled a large brown cat which lay beside him and grinned, probably in love, as he imitated the purring of his friend. When supper was served he shared in the repast and fed his companion and three or four others of the same race, who craved a portion as faithfully and equally as he attended to his own wants.

There was no poverty in that habitation, and our fare included not merely the milk, now melted, drawn from the swine as well as the goats, and cheese and brown bread, but even a slice of roasted chamois and a glass of Kirsch. While my host divided these good things to children and dependents he told me that he had been a soldier in the Swiss Guard of Paris, and thus disclosed the source of his address and language, for all the other inmates spoke a patois of mingled German and Italian, while a few intelligible French words floated about in the unmelodious mixture. He further narrated that my poor friend Gottfried was his eldest son, and a complete Cretin; that he had seven other children, three of whom were cretinoid, that every alternate child was perfectly sound and sane, and pointed to a daughter as the flower of the whole, and yet, even upon the neck of this really fair and blooming damsel, I observed that the *Agnus Dei*, held by a becoming strip of black velvet rested upon a tumour of the throat, which I suspect medical men would call a diseased gland, but which was here viewed as some-

what ornamental. We were very soon, domestics and all, arranged on seats and settles around the comfortable kitchen. All the inmates were occupied in some way, except Gottfried and an elderly woman, who I learned was his mother, of very infirm and loathsome aspect, who rocked constantly from side to side, and was evidently ministered to, but gave no sign or sound that she knew of these attentions. Many of the maidens, in their stiff, towering white caps, buttoned and broidered velvet or woollen jackets, and voluminous waistless red-striped petticoats, looked very pleasing and cheerful as they plied this distaff, knitted, prepared leather, and so on ; but I was chiefly attracted by the brothers and sister of my guide, who, although not of such insignificant dimensions, were odd, funny, contorted little individuals ; one had a square, another a round, a third a regular, and all large heads ; all had goitres, all were gross in person, crooked in limbs, and extremely ugly ; when they peered at an object they inclined their faces as if to listen or smell, they opened their mouths, and exhibited ungainly and grotesque attitudes and gestures. All were earnestly bent on a piece of metal which shone and glistened in the fire-blaze, which they rubbed and brushed and twisted with great assiduity, which formed the barrel of the musical boxes, and particular portions of the watches constructed at Geneva, where these contributions from the snow line were regularly sent. Each could do his own morsel of work but no more, each could articulate a few words respecting this task, but, though not mute, they could not converse ; each was happy and contented and solitary. While we were listening to a rather doleful chant, it might have been a dirge, it was, I believe, a hymn to the Virgin, the slumbering Gottfried rose, and embracing his brown cat tightly, and followed by several kittens, bending his knee as well as he could when passing a niche in the wall, left the group. Our company gradually dispersed, and I was left alone with my landlord.

While glancing curiously over the coarse but highly polished furniture, some of which was of walnut wood, which shone like a mirror in the fire light, and marking the shelf of old and tattered books beside the larger shelves of cheeses and the well kept rifle, hung above a series of ice axes, on a beam, my eye rested

upon an inexplicable machine close to the recess where the dotard mother had sat. It was positively an easel, made from the rough and unbarked stems of fir saplings. In front there was a rude bench on which were carefully arranged brushes, pencils, and paints ; but more wonderful than all, there hung from it a picture of a brown cat, engaged in washing her face, while several of her family were depicted as gambolling around. My look of astonishment elicited the remarks, "Ah, yes! poor Gottfried's work. He has loved, and lived with, and painted cats since he was a child, and he is now thirty years old. He prefers the society of brutes to that of men ; seems to know what they mean to say ; replies to them exactly in their own language. But he likes cats better than all others. When we go to Berne to sell his pictures he fraternises with the bears kept in the pits, and gazes at them and growls for hours." I closely examined the cat portrait and found it so beautiful and not merely accurate, but displaying so much artistic finish and so contradictory of all my theories as to the qualities of the decrepid lout that had lain like an ugly animal at my feet during the evening, that my expression must have suggested sheer scepticism as to his connection with the painting before me, as the father interposed the assurance, "Ah! God blesses the cretin with many gifts and thoughts which he denies to us. If my poor boy could speak distinctly he might tell us what he sees or seeks when he wanders up among the glaciers, but I suspect that to-day when you met him he was looking for a strayed kitten. He has drawn thousands of these creatures: he scratched figures like theirs with flints upon the rocks and the ice almost as soon as he could walk. Whenever he knew the use of charcoal and chalk he destroyed every wall and board with similar drawings ; and when he got paper and colours he produced what you see almost without a lesson, and without any copy but the creatures whom he feeds. He paints large cats and little cats, white cats and black cats, young ones and old ones ; sitting, sleeping, climbing, leaping, fighting, and love-making—but nothing save cats. You shall see his gallery to-morrow. Then there is Conrad can drive the cattle, and Michel, though he can neither read nor write, almost supports himself by working for the Geneva

watchmakers ; and then I am told that on the Italian side and in the Val d'Aosta, there are thousands of cretins, who, although they cannot carry a musket like me, can do more husbandry than I. Here we have fewer outcasts, but I think they are more disgusting and useless ; and they tell me that at Sion, in the Valais, there is an hospital where they shelter and bury alive the most offensive until they die. Even here, he added pathetically, our very oxen, when they pasture among the marches, become goitreux and die." As we went up to my very cold but very clean sleeping chamber, the outer door was opened and I gazed upon the most glorious scene I had ever witnessed. The snow fell no longer, but every spot was white and brilliant. There was no moonlight, but occasionally broad flashes of lightning played upon the opposite hills, illuminating particular spots with a vividness almost dazzling, and followed by peals of thunder, which sounded like successive discharges of artillery from the peaks above ; while upon these seemed to rest the clear blue sky, pierced by innumerable stars, which shone down into the valley, penetrating deeply, to our belief, into the snow mirror beneath, and multiplied in myriads by every flake and crystal upon which their rays fell ; and more striking than all this the Aurora blazed, I may say bloomed, in the far north in crimson and gold, as if the lightning had been stopped and frozen in the clouds. It was in an awestruck, if not a prayerful spirit, a spirit of close approach and commune with the Author of the throes of creative power, that I saw all these wonders, unseen before, and questioned Him or myself, what is there in all these surroundings which breedeth and spreadeth the invisible poison, destroying my brother man ? Is it in the pure snow or the purer ether ; does it rise from the sparkling streams, or fall from the electric clouds ; is it the heritage of a long descended, perhaps primitive and worn out race ; or is it simply an expression of the poverty and privations under which man has here to struggle with the elements ? On our way we passed a crypt or cabin in which lay the crib of Gottfried, selected and pertenaciously held by him because it was near the vast common stable and his beloved four-footed allies, whose proximity and intercourse he always courted. Here he lay in a profound sleep, not

undrest, coiled among countless deckens, old blankets, and coverlets, but conspicuously surrounded, even overlaid, by heaps of cats. Next morning all the inmates were astir long before dawn, and I descended to find Gottfried perched upon his bench —he may have been the earliest of all—busily, I may say intensely, engaged in completing the cat at her ablutions. I concluded that he was deaf as well as a dullard, as he neither noticed his sisters or others, who were passing quickly to and fro, nor myself, who stood obtrusively and inquisitively at his elbow. A number of his feline originals squatted near him, or nestled near the huge fire, by the light of which he painted, but he looked towards his favourite so rarely that my impression was that he must be calling up his creations from memory or fancy, for it is no heresy to suppose that imagination may twinkle in the rudimentary mind somewhat in the same manner and according to the same laws that it enlightens like sunrise the wider realm of genius. His father soon joined us, and fulfilled his promise of exhibiting the "petit Louvre," as he jokingly called it, of his son, and of which, I imagined, he was not a little proud. This consisted of numbers of water-colour drawings, but especially of oil paintings, of various dimensions and characters and degrees of excellence, but all so exquisitely executed that, had not one of their number actually risen into existence before me, I should have doubted of their origin and have attributed them to some animal painter of the Flemish school. There were cats in sorrow and in anger, there were sensible cats and foolish cats, there were cats of character and imbecile cats, and even a cat with a goitre, but all bore a strange, though faint, resemblance to a typical cat, which was in all probability the first or the fairest individual which had arrested his early and plastic perception. He cared for none of the productions which his father was now presenting, upon which he had formerly bestowed so much care and labour, but was ever bent upon the representation of new cats in new colours and attitudes, and felt no interest in the large prices which his father confessed his works obtained. He had no ambition, no riches, no objects but the immortalisation of his beloved cats. The snow began again to fall, now almost in masses, and I felt

no regret that I was compelled to remain beside the cat's Raphael, and to watch the marvellous and continuous efforts of his industry and art; and if anyone desires to share in my pleasure, let them go to the museum of Dresden, or, at random, to a dozen other collection of paintings, and they will find the highly-prized productions—the ever-living and ever to live cats of Gottfried Kund.

II.

THE PARRICIDE.

"Laws act after crime have been committed; prevention goes before them both."– *Zimmerman.*

"Bossu," "Bossu," screamed a mob of ragged little urchins, as they clattered along the muddy road which formed the only street in the village of Melun. Their cries and missiles were directed to a dwarfish, ungainly child, more ragged and filthy than themselves, who was evidently urged forward by terror, roused by the sound of a score of sabots and voices and by the mud and pebbles which were showered around him. The object of chase was not merely a thing of shreds and patches, but a hideously deformed dwarf, who shuffled, shambled, and leaped, rather than ran, and who, as he turned to look at his persecutors, displayed a face, scarred by some accident or disease, in which a large mouth, with protruding teeth, squinting eyes, and a retreating forehead were the prominent features, and which was lighted up by a lurid and puzzled expression it might be of rage, it might be of panic. "Bossu," "Bossu, he has stolen widow Marie's cake;" but whether from frolic, or cowardice, or sympathy, or all these feelings together, the assailants rarely aimed at, or hit their victim, and whenever the last house in the street was reached ceased their pursuit and laughed merrily when they saw that the imbecile boy, while escaping from their judicial wrath, was busily engaged in devouring the bread which he had purloined. Still alive to the sense of danger, Benét made his way homewards, sometimes hopping on one leg, sometimes clambering upon all-fours, and again tumbling a somersault in order to speed his progress. Again, a distant shout is heard, and he rushed into the brushwood panting and exhausted, but

creeping stealthily along among the bushes. This coppice, fragrant with myrtle and sage and lavender, formed the fringe of one of those vast forests which cover the otherwise unfertile slopes of the Department of the Deux-Sevres. It was a bright but soft autum day while the simpleton crawled along under cover until he reached an open glade where the shadows of some stately chesnut trees crossed the sward. The sunlight fell in patches between the leaves upon the grass, but Benét avoided these as if the dark spots would shelter him from his oppressors. All around was still and solemn; occasionally there was the rustle of a fallen leaf or the latest song of a bird, and more audibly the chesnuts and acorns fell around, and now and then squirrels descended to make their evening meal on these fruits, or to carry the treasures to their winter hoard. Benét watched these creatures, mocked them, imitated their movements, eat large quantities of their fare, but, while sharing in their meal, furtively collected stones and twigs and then rushed upon his companions as if in wild retaliation for the cruelties to which he had been subjected. Again he was disturbed, but now the intruders came through the wood; but burrowing his shaggy head among the leaves and as if imagining that he was concealed by the shadow in which he lay, Benét remained quiet in fancied security. "Ho," "Ho," cried one of three sportsmen who approached, and at the same time urged an immense wolf-hound to attack the trembling boy. The brute, however, as if detecting a kindred animal, merely snuffed around the place where he lay and then stood harmless and interested over him. "It must be Benét," said one of the party, "Widow Michel's idiot boy, and yet he is very far from home." "It would be well to kill the cochon," said the first speaker, "he can be of no use and must be a burden to his friends;" at the same time, however, taking a linnet from a string of birds which were the products of their chase and formed a ludicrous contrast with the hunters, the guns, and the gigantic dog engaged in their capture, and casting it towards Benét, it was immediately clutched, plucked, and devoured voraciously. "Who is the creature?" elicited the reply that he was the son of Jaspar, the jolly old soldier, who was wounded at Wagram, who lived drunk, died

drunk, and set fire to his coffin, so that the priest had to exorcise the Fire Devil as well as bury the corpse. "But he is a farceur as well as a fool," continued the narrator. "Did you ever hear how he was about to serve his little cousin? The pig had been killed the day before, and he had noticed everything the butcher did. Well, he was found next day in the yard, with the girl beside him, a tub to hold the blood, and so on, and he was engaged in sharpening a knife on the grindstone for the purpose of concluding the job by cutting her throat.' A harsh laugh, a kick, and an exclamation that it would be better to crush the varmin at once, concluded the colloquy, and the speakers passed on, but one of them pushed a centime or two into the idiot's hand and told him to make haste home before nightfall. Benét knew not the value of the coin but that it meant an apple, and grasped it tightly as he wandered laboriously further and further among the trees. Then twilight came, and then night, and ignorant of time, but sensible to darkness and cold, the shivering and whimpering boy sought shelter and sleep among the heath now dry and withered by the summer suns. Did he dream of the rabble and the riot and the peril from which he had escaped, or do such simple yet passionate beings dream at all? Perhaps the fox was frightened by his cry of anguish, or revenge, or the owl looked down upon him as a disturber of his midnight work! Long as Benét slept, for the vacant mind rests long, he woke at last, just as the sun had risen and cast long streams of light across a broad and gleaming river and along the forest paths and seemed rather to rest upon the surface of the earth, to embrace every flower and shrub and tree, than to lighten the upper air and skies as at other times. The rays came as if in a straight line and down a vista of oaks into the very eyes of the newly-awakened and wondering imbecile. He had never seen such a sight before, it may be that he had never noticed the sun at all. Moved, as savages are, he gazed fixedly at the great circle of fire, muttered some sounds intended as a matin hymn when taught him by his parent in hours of awe and repose; and still he moodily watched the widening influence of the dayspring. But that hour of sunrise, though glad and glorious to many, is cold and ungenial to more, and

Benét thought of a blazing hearth and a warm soup. He moved still stealthily through the furze and the ferns, gazed wistfully at the birds as they flew or fluttered above him, and crushed a toad with unmitigated cruelty as he reached a byepath which led deviously to his mother's dwelling, for, with the unerring instinct of his degraded race, he had threaded the mazes of the wild and wooded uplands where he had slept, and passed like a bird or a bee directly to his home. On his way thither he forgot not his usual calling, and surprised the early peasant and shepherd by summoning them for his accustomed dole of alms or food or fruit. His parent gazed wistfully and rejoicingly at the approach of her absentee, but turned from his haggard look of alarm and hatred in order to conciliate the excitement which she had frequently before witnessed, by offering such humble dainties as she possessed. The oblation succeeded only so far that he partook of it, growled and snarled in what was to her and to those who knew him articulate language, but resembled rather the utterances of a wild beast or a drunkard. To her inquiries as to what had happened, and where he had spent the night, he was either deaf or unobservant. He kicked the furniture, attempted to strangle a favourite puppy, then beat himself upon the head, and seemed animated by an insatiable appetite for food and heat. As he became partially calm his words assumed the more definite sound of oaths and obscenities, he gesticulated and grimaced as if copying the movements of his mother, hid the piece of money which had been given to him in a familiar corner, and then knelt down where he had been accustomed to do and repeated the prayer he had been taught. Suddenly, and leaving this duty unfinished, he ran into the garden. His only friend was distressed, but not disconcerted, by his conduct, for she had been for twenty years familiar with the irritable and variable temper of her weak minded charge. She had protected him so far as she could from the mockery and barbarity of those who found in his sufferings and impotent resistance a source of merriment. She had soothed and softened the gusts of excitement to which such cruel jesting gave rise; she had endeavoured to impart to his darkened spirit some of the simple truths which gave light and love to her own, and had

so far accomplished her arduous task as to enable him to say a few words of Our Father, to bless himself, and to kneel quietly and reverently enough when she led him to the village church. She had even instructed him in various domestic and rude occupations; he could knit, he could put on a fagot, he could dig, and, what was a marvel to her neighbours, he could pro nounce a few words of the "Garden of the Soul," forgetting them, however, unless the lesson were repeated every day, but yet she confessed that notwithstanding all his progress and that she could see in him the roots or beginnings of higher things, he ever and anon very much resembled her poor dead Jaspar, when he had blotted out himself and let loose the Absinthe fiend in the Cabaret. Widow Michel was a shrewd, kind, motherly person, and, after a humble fashion, a village notable. Her hands were the deftest in clothing man in his first and last raiment. Her voice was the sweeteet and most consoling when sickness or sorrow fell on her neighbours. She had tales for the children and stories of the Loup Garrou, and of the bloody war of La Vendée for the elders. No marriage, no christening, no gathering of gossips could take place without her counten. ance and counsel. She had bandages for wounds and cordials for coughs, she bled the whole parish in Spring time with a phlegm, and was not she the daughter of the Blacksmith who cured the ills of all the Bestial? It was even whispered that she had remedies for deeper ailments, love-potions, and that Benét might not be an idiot after all, but a Cagot, a descendant of the Moors, who concealed in his uncouth carcase forgotten but precious lore, and was the source of her knowledge and power, as well as the centre of her unbounded love. Then she was rich, for Jaspar, though maintaining himself in a sort of stupid delirium for years, did so at the expense of others, and had a pension for his services and his wound, for that was the golden age for old soldiers, and the cottage and the garden had become her own. In her kitchen you could scarcely see the garish religious prints upon the wall, and the blackened picture of the Virgin with the little lamp before it, for the hams and sausages, and dried shreds of pumpkins and raisins, which hung from the roof; and were there not bins and bags of chesnuts

and walnuts and almonds, gifts from adjoining orchards, scattered around ; and was there not a cask of wine standing behind the store of firewood, sent by the Priest or Sieur St. Aulaire ? Then she had two goats that nibbled the coarse pasture and sweet-scented underwood on the common, and afforded many a meal to the household, except when Benét forestalled the supply by feloniously sucking the well-filled udders. And her garden, the best kept and most productive of all around, where the enormous crops of navets, the joubarbe for sores, the basil, perhaps for philtres, the sweet marjoram and marigold for the pot, and even the ever faithful fig-tree on the gable, were almost shrouded and shaded by an ancient walnut tree from sun or storm. In that favourite spot, where the old widow was accustomed to spend so many solitary hours seated in an arbour, made from an old cask, Benét was now tearing the leaves from an orange tree which gave its blossoms but never its fruit, when suddenly he started, rushed into the kitchen, bearing a block of wood in his long uplifted arms ; then there was a crash, a cry, and the door closed, and then the dwarf was seen trundling along the road like a wheel. At first he muttered, then he followed a damsel-fly, then he plucked berries from a hedge, and shortly afterwards he visited some of his well-known haunts, and obtained the pittance which he sought. Hours had passed in this customary occupation when he reached a house where he was always welcomed and much favoured. To the friendly greetings and inquiries he answered, "I am very hungry, and have killed my mother." The incredulous question, "You cannot have murdered your kind mother?" extorted nothing but the incoherent sentences that "he had done so because the Limousins were too big and proud, and that he wished to make them see clearer." Then he went on his way, and was no more seen, except by those from whom he begged, until he sought his night lair. There is none to tell whether he returned to his old home, whether he found shelter where there was neither light, nor life, nor love to cheer him ; but upon the following day he was found calmly sleeping in a hole which he had partially dug under the walnut tree, and which, when roused, he proceeded to make deeper, and quietly telling those who inter-

rupted his work that the trench was for his mother whom he had crushed. Then followed the arrival of the Mayor of the Commune, whom he offered to bury, then of the Gendarmes, who, entering the chamber of death, found him busily engaged in pulling stockings upon the legs of a corpse, of which, though seated on a chair, the head was almost reduced to a hideous pulp. The process of decay had begun, and the miserable, half-conscious offender was carried at once before the officers of the law, where, amid absurd prevarication, he at length admitted in sullen and menacing terms that he had killed his mother, that he would do it again, and that he would destroy even a child in the cradle, because if it grew up it would mock and maltreat him. The end of all was a verdict of inability to distinguish right from wrong, and his consignment to an asylum, within whose walls he must be locked up, loathed, and probably forgotten, until the key of death shall set his spirit free.

III.

DONALD THE WITLESS.

"Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise."—*Douay version of the Psalms.*

We might describe Glen Tryon as a dried-up water course, twenty miles long, lying in the depths and under the shadow of the giant hills which form part of the Grampian range in Western Perthshire. It varies in width as in every other feature, sometimes opening out into holms and sunny slopes, where scanty crops of grain and potato may be reared; sometimes it bears stately and aged woods, and where it joins a lowland expanse it is covered with hard-wood trees, one of which must have been a sapling when that majestic savage, Kenneth MacAlpine, if not a Celtic myth, ruled the land; but more frequently is narrow, more like a fissure or cleft in weather-stained rocks, and overhanging slopes where a few sheep may crop the tufts of grass struggling towards the light among the furze or hazels. The road, chiefly for the accommodation of these animals and their shepherds, crept, in winter we would

say tentatively, along the margin of the burn which was all that remained of what must have once been a vast and mighty torrent. But although rude and rough enough the path carried the traveller, and as I have traversed it often I may speak confidently, through many a fair and secluded scene where the sparkling falls and the deep linns of the companion stream, clear and brown as Cairngorm, or varying in tint like opal, formed a prominent feature, and presented that magical picture only seen in such spots, where the branches, or bushes, or flowers in shadow, and the skies or clouds above, are all brought together, but in order and beauty, in the crystal water. My mission was not that of a landscape hunter, but when I went there every twelfth of August, I confess that I was often tempted from the glory of making a heavy bag to secure the enjoyment of gazing upon a wild mountain pass, of loitering or lolling in the bright autumn sun upon the heathery hill side, or renewing old ties and acquaintanceship with the inhabitants. I knew every corrie or cairn, every dell or moss, and every winding of the glen ; I knew every cot-house, and the two ruined and deserted castles which gave legends and traditions of the "45" to the region ; I claimed as a sort of friend every inhabitant, and, after all, the circle was not a large one, inciuding, however, two or three farmers and their dependents, a score or two of shepherds and labourers, and fragments of families which had once acknowledged such a head, and containing, besides all these, one or two old crippled pensioners, who told how Albuera and Waterloo were won, how trouts of enormous weight and pluck were caught ; a poacher who, while pouring forth every kind of odd and eerie information, did not particularize either the scene or success of his special calling ; a decayed dominie who journeyed from house to house to teach the bairns the three R's, or even the humanities, and a flourishing tailor who pursued a similar course of migration, and was thought to be the cleverest, and was certainly the most popular, of the two. There was one place, a humble homestead, to which I had gentler leanings than to others, which stood about the middle of the valley, where the wide-spreading sheep walks and few steep meadows which formed the banks of the river contracted into a pass or gateway,

after a space to expand again into wider but still narrow proportions. At this point crags clad with birch overhung both sides, the water gushed through a sharply worn gully in the rock, and then spread out into a smoother but still rippled sheet beyond, which was crossed by a few stepping stones leading to a green bank; but these must have been covered when the stream, came down in flood or in wintry force, leaving the Black House on the further side isolated and unapproachable. It was not because this dwelling was fair or attractive that its inmates inspired joy or mirth, that a reel, or a song, or a superstition might gather the neighbours round the merry hearth when the day was done that I was led thither, for my objects were the reverse of all these. The cottage was a type of its class, it stood dark and dismal a few feet above the level of the burn, separated from it only by the green sward, and was overhung by the precipice forming the south pillar of the gateway, against the base of which a large portion of it rested. On one side there was a small square patch in which a few potatoes and cabbages attempted to grow from a peat mould surrounded by a wattled fence to protect this primitive garden from the incursions of imaginary rabbits. But these vegetables were pale and sickly, as the sun rarely penetrated to their upturned leaves, indeed for many months his rays never reached the spot at all; during others a transient gleam could be noticed on the summit of an opposite hill, and the holding was justifiably designated Croft-Dhu. On the other gable was neatly and orderly piled a large stalk of oblong peats and rude masses of turf intended to serve as winter fuel. The Black House was itself constructed of the same material, cut from a distant bog, and built above a course of large stones, and around a frame work of fir and hazel poles. The roof was thatched with the stem and root of the bracken in a very regular and artistic manner, sloping abruptly to a ridge completed by stripes of green moss, from which grass grew in abundance, at one end of which rose a basket-shaped chimney, from which a thin blue wreath of smoke passed slowly upwards among the leaves of a tree which had been thrown by some recent storm from the impending cliff. When you stood upon the threshold there was on one side a

large boulder which was used as a seat and on the other a pool of inky fluid which had dropped from the eaves during the last shower, and you required to step over a high ledge, intended to exclude the snow and the wind, in order to obtain ingress. The interior was black and grim, receiving more light from what streamed down the large chimney and through the door than from the two panes of bull-eyed glass which constituted the only windows. There were two or three square stones and a stool as seats, a large green chest in one corner, but all the other articles of furniture, the walls and rafters, were all dyed like ebony by the peat smoke. The greater part of the floor had been formed of hardened moss which, however, still took the impress of the foot, but around the hearth, there being no grate, a rough pavement of stones had been attempted. A faint glimmer of flame arose from the centre of several cordons of peats which had been so arranged that they might be dried before being burned. When I first entered this room a prematurely aged woman occupied one of two cavernous box-beds, muttering what, on translation, proved to be reiterated exclamations of despair. I at first concluded that, like many of her country-women, in the decline of life she had given herself up to tea-drinking, religious pensiveness, and bed-keeping ; but I discovered that her melancholy followed a domestic tragedy, which had arisen when her only and industrious son returned from a Fair struck with gloom and inactivity and assumed the present form when his body was found in a deep pool of the burn. But even into this sombre scene and history, which I conceived might in part be due to that indifference or intolerance of bright light which certain races as well as individuals manifest, there had been introduced a cheering and beautifying element. Along the bottom of the walls and on every available projection there were arranged, symmetrically enough, white and polished stones evidently from the bottom of the stream, while from old bottles and broken cups there arose, or in corners and upon ledges there were disposed, twigs and bunches of wild flowers, and these had been selected not at random but for some very obvious quality, as most prominent among them were the sweet bog-myrtle, the snowy Queen of

the meadow, and the gay Lychnis. "All that is Donald's doing," said a wan and worn but tidily dressed woman, who bade me welcome. She had been a domestic servant in the Lowlands, but had returned after a few years to her native country with her small earnings and with a good deal of the culture and the language of her employers, to become the wife of the suicide and the mother of his two children. Her boys were on my arrival seated on the brink of the burn, and on joining them I found that Donald, the ornamentor of the cottage, was a pale, pinched boy of about ten years old, with a long neck, long limbs, and slender fingers, an elongated but small head, sharply defined features, and lank but diminutive body. On one side was Ewen, a younger brother, nearly blind, but of healthier aspect, who grasped the kilt of his companion tenaciously; on the other lay a collie of large size, with long yellow and black hair, his head resting on his paws, but regarding all around with sagacious and astute look. I had looked inquiringly at the mother, who volunteered the explanation—"Yes, sir, Donald is not all there; he was a weakly child, and the dominie could never teach him anything though he tried hard for several winters, while Ewen can learn all that he is desired. Donald will sit where you see him, from sunrise to sunset, making hundreds of these little baskets, which are of no use except to amuse him, and which he seems forced to make, and whether he gets willow wands or broom or rushes. Now and then he becomes very restless and wanders away to the corries, but Ewen never quits his grip of him, and guides him as well as if he saw. The poor beast, the collie, is nearly as good a guard as if he were human. He lay beside the linn where my poor gudeman drowned himself, for two days, and now he never leaves the boy. Donald sometimes cries like a sheep, and I think that the brute mistakes him for one. But I often think that Donald knows and sees more than he can tell us. He will gaze for hours on that round hillock where they say the *Daoine Shi* live, following something with his eyes and laughing merrily; and then when there is wind or thunder he goes up to the hillside, fixes his gaze upon the clouds, waves his arms wildly, and cries, 'Big man angry, big man speaking to

Donald ;' but although he can say some thirty words, we cannot understand whether it be God that he speaks of or not ; and when Ewen brings him back, or rather when he brings Ewen back, for the weak leads the blind, while the blind clothes and tends the weak, he falls into a deep sleep for days together."

Another grouse season brought me to Croft Dhu, but great changes had taken place in the intervening years in everything except in external nature and the beauty and magnificence of the surroundings of that lowly shieling. I did not see the idiot or his associate as I crossed the stream, although many of his little baskets lay scattered around. I was met by his mother at the threshold, who wore a still more sad and dejected expression than when last seen, and began almost abruptly in a sort of poetic cadence "that the shadow of death and misfortune had fallen upon her kindred, but that a heavenly light had entered the darkened spirit of her feeble son." The desponding, bedridden mother-in-law had died of cancer, the little Ewen had drooped immediately after being separated from his brother, and died, she believed, from grief, although the doctors said it was "a wasting;" then the two kind ladies of the Castle had thought that Donald was lost for want of learning, and that he could be made to know his Maker if he only could get wise and experienced teachers, and he was sent away to the far South. He came back once to see us, and "I have nothing to say against the place where he had been, for he was well clothed and well kept, for he had learned and unlearned many things, but he did not like our ways so well as before; he said our sugar was not so sweet nor our flowers so bonny as at his other home, and wished to go back there. Before the holidays came again his master wrote that he was ill and weak, but that he would not be sent back till the fine weather returned. He was at length brought here like a shadow, and has never left his bed since." I found the invalid much emaciated and evidently sinking, in the bed where his grandmother had died, but busily engaged in the fabrication of baskets, many of which, as well as the materials from which he was constructing them, lay neatly arranged beside him. There in front of the bed rested the sagacious collie, as if gazing intently upon his former

charge, and all around were displayed with motherly care and within his reach the wild flowers that he loved so much. He spoke to me as if he knew me well, using a far more copious and correct vocabulary than upon former occasions ; he could put as well as answer questions, and spontaneously and with great animation, although still in infantile fashion, gave a description of the school, the masters, the playmates, towards which his memory constantly turned, freshly and fondly. His mother, solicitous to exhibit his acquirements, brought forth shoes and brushes which he had made, stockings which he had knitted, a tiny letter which he had written, and caused him to repeat verses of Scripture and hymns which he had committed. He had forgotten his native Gaelic while away, and had, according to his mother, lost many portions of religious knowledge then imbibed ; but on the English version being read to him, a recently attuned cord was struck, and he exhibited a familiarity with phrases and versicles altogether marvellous. In genial intercourse with his guardian he expressed a distinct belief in the big man who had made him, in the good man who had been killed for him, and in something which dwelt within him ; his mother whispered that she feared he imagined it to be the Daoine Shi, but he immediately added something that made him good, that made him like his mother, and would help him to the good man. These simple truths may have been mechanically repeated, but who dared to assert that they have not penetrated far deeper or welled up from sources very much below or beyond personal consciousness or memory.

A few weeks later I bent my steps towards the house of mourning, pondering whether the family mental contamination had not cropped out in idiocy, and whether the solitary and gloomy region and dwelling, and the seclusion, and the removal from all the influences which rouse and raise up intelligence, had not affected the whole race. The widow was now the only inmate of the gloomy room, but the dog lay precisely where I had left it, but now before an empty bed. She told me how Donald had suffered and grown so thin, that his cheeks seemed like paper, and that the light shone through his arms, but that he had been calm, and gentle, and resigned. She

affirmed that he patiently, and with brightening eyes, said his only hope was in his Saviour. Pain may stir up and stimulate the simple and rudimentary spirit; and devotional exercises taught as a duty, or sown as a seed, may ripen into communion with the unseen, though not the unfelt, for the weeping mother averred that out of the decaying body appeared to rise the growing soul, that he said his prayers frequently, and that at the close he put up his hands and murmured, "Me want to go up! Me want to go up!" The consolations of the solitary woman were sound and sweet, but a deep regret burst forth in the twice repeated words, "he never asked for little Ewen."

IV.

MIRACLE-WORKING.

"A miracle I take to be a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine."—*Locke.*

I RESOLVED to give Jim a holiday out of the common run. Jim was an intelligent and imaginative boy at that delightful age when the spirit's eyes are just opening upon the wonder-world of realities, but when there is still a half questioning faith in the gospel of fables and fairies and a strong craving for the supernatural, because it is incredible. I promised him that we should pass a day in Fairyland, and his large blue eyes gleamed with such intense delight and romantic expectation, that we went at once. We were whirled along a railway, but Jim cared nothing for sixty miles an hour, and gazed wistfully for the golden gate which was to admit us to the kingdom of Robin Goodfellow. It was fortunate for the success of my expedition that we were first introduced into a farm office, where three heavy, stolid lads were lazily engaged in cutting fodder for cattle. Jim at once whispered, "These must be the Ogres who guard the gate; they are ugly enough." The guardians pursued their work unheeding of our presence. This consisted in two of the number moving the handles of a wheel slowly round, which, acting upon knives in the barrel of the machine, reduced the hay and straw to small

portions, while the third fed the chopping trough with the necessary material. In order to enlighten my young friend, I caused the supply of this material to cease, but the workmen continued the revolutions of the wheel as laboriously as ever, and utterly unconscious that they were "grinding nothing." When the feeding was resumed, I stopped the wheel, but the hay and straw were forced into the proper channel just as before. But the deeply interested yet impervious youth remarked, "Ah, I see, the warrior Fairies have taken these Giants prisoners, and have struck them upon the head with a stone, as they do in Siberia, that they may be stupid and willing slaves." We next passed, on our upward way, a miniature hay-field, where several small urchins were tossing about the crop in no very approved fashion, but Jim danced with eagerness as he conceived that the size of the inhabitants might diminish as we penetrated into their country, and that he would at length be rewarded by seeing the Pucks and Mabs and Fine-ears of story. A tiny village of poultry yards, cots for Guinea pigs and rabbit-hutches, then attracted our attention—"How kind in the fairies to give their pets such beautiful houses ; but gracious how large they are, why that Russian is as big as my Tom, and it would take a thousand fairies to bring enough dandelion for that Orlop, and then the whole set might play at hide-and-seek among the hairs of his ears." We wended our way towards a vast and magnificent palace on the summit of the hill, and while admiring a succession of little gardens and flower beds, glowing with bright colours and scattering perfume all around, we encountered on one of the broad walks a long string of minute carriages, each drawn by a servant, and each containing a diminutive creature, varying, however, in size, but all in some manner odd and grotesque, and somewhat repulsive in aspect. "These must be the old or the sick fairies," said Jim. "I should like to speak with them, but then they won't understand me, for those with the big heads, and the small heads, and the queer eyes, and the twisted arms, cannot be English people." But Jim, somewhat disappointed, interposed, "I always thought that fairies were much smaller than Tom Thumb, that they could sit on mushrooms, had digitalis flowers for helmets, and

a reed for a spear, wore poppy leaves and violets for hose and doublets, and rung chimes on the pretty blue bells." I thought it best to displace this feeling by new impressions, and luckily, as we ascended into the stately entrance, a long array of manikins and damsels approached with measured and military step in opposite directions, entering a large and elegant hall, and, as they were all habited nearly alike, they seemed to bear out Jim's exultant expression, "Oh, this is regular jolly; these must be the Grehadier Guards, or Household troops. What a button of a fellow the King will be." We saw these two or three hundred children dine. My companion was evidently puzzled by the deformity and decrepitude of the revellers, by the circumstance that many required to be fed, and that there were no joints nor plum-puddings. His perplexity took a new phase; these were not fairies, and yet, according to his standard, they were not human beings; a large proportion of them had the stature and features of children, but still they were old and shrivelled. "It must be a vast school for all the dwarfs and boobies in the world." Then they sang grace, very much as was done in his own school, and then marched away in compact companies and regiments, as if for parade. "Do they play cricket," asked Jim, and we adjourned to the field, but were drawn away to inspect a carpenter's yard, where a boy was engaged building, plank by plank, and according to the precise rules of his trade, a miniature ship of about six feet in length, but corresponding in every detail with the monsters which are created in Plymouth and Portsmouth. The expert was both dexterous and enthusiastic in his craft, anxious, so far as his limited means would go, to explain every step of his progress, and greedy for praise of what he esteemed so perfect and beautiful. Noticing, perhaps, that our interest began to flag, he hurried us off to see his other ship, his complete ship, his ship that had been sent to the Exhibition in Paris in 1862. It is said to be top-heavy, but its architect did not disclose this, and Jim would not have cared for the information, for he was now convinced, as he scrutinised every mast and rope and pulley, that here was a vessel adapted in dimensions and every other respect for the microscopic beings, whom he still hoped to

find, and that it must be the Royal yacht, if not a ship of the Line. The ingenious simpleton who stood beside us had no fancies of this kind, and no other impulse or intuition except that he is internally urged to do what he delights in doing, for, although he has now had for many years instruction in carpenter work, the original instinct which led him to attempt the construction of the toy before us is said to have been the figure of a ship upon a cotton handkerchief, which had been given him, a suggestion which must, however, have been enlarged by a subsequent visit of a few hours to Deptford Dockyard. We were now conducted through schoolrooms, where every form of tuition and training was in operation, from the distinction of colours and forms to articulation of letters and syllables, and the arts of standing and walking and using the fingers, up to reading and writing and sewing, and even dancing and singing. Jim looked rather contemptuously on the acquirements of these embryo minds, as so much inferior to the capacity of a boy of the third form, but was mollified by the failures and tears of a minim of a girl in her attempts to pick up a needle, and to thread it, after it had been placed in her untaught and indocile fingers. A new scene opened upon us when we became customers in the Game of the Shop, where the counter is laid out with various tempting articles in daily use, at which some of the inmates acts as buyers and some as sellers, and are at the same time amused and instructed in the process of exchange, in the elements of knowledge, and as to the value of goods and money, number, and weights and measures. When the shop and its furniture and properly labelled drawers are arranged for active business, a boy is appointed to take the part of shopkeeper, who solicits sale from behind the counter, and disposes of his commodities to the many little claimants who express their wants as well as they can. It was most interesting to see the search of the shopman for the proper label and substance, the puzzlement to find the correct weight, as to which the class was strictly questioned, as well as to every other weight the shopman touched. Then there was further perplexity in getting the correct quantity of the required substance, as, for instance, sugar in the scale. When the quantity

was large the process of weighing was often begun by putting in little spoonfuls, and when at last the balance approaches it was sometimes a thorough poser to know whether they were to remove some of the commodity or to add to it. All this caused a pleasant excitement, till the due proportions were achieved, and then came the moment for payment, which was one of increased agitation, all present trying to check every step in the proceeding. Combinations of pence and half-pence were trying things to get over, and sometimes the purchaser who could not calculate them used cunning, and tried to pay with silver coin, asked for change, and so threw his perplexity on the shopman. At these critical conjunctures of doubt and difficulty, Jim, who had entered with his whole heart into the traffic as if it had been real and sober, and was anxious to become an actual purchaser upon a grand scale, often volunteered his assistance, opportunely for the defective arithmetician, but greatly to the interruption of the lesson. After pronouncing the scene "the jolliest thing of all," he scampered on eager for new surprises. We now passed through the industrial department amid groups of sempstresses and tailors, weavers, mat-makers, joiners, shoemakers, all of whom had learned their trade in their present home, reaching, of course, various degrees of dexterity and usefulness, according to their mental and bodily capacity. We paused beside one industrious little fellow, who, though blind, was constructing beautiful baskets, and who, though, of course, unable to see the clock, could tell precisely and accurately the minute and hour of the day. Jim asked, dubiously, "How does he do it?" My answer, "in the same way that Lord Stowell did it, by intuition," did not, I fear, afford him the desired clue. We were joined during our examination of the products of this busy hive, consisting of clothes, mats, shoes, brushes, worsted work, humble artistic attempts, &c., by a youth of pleasant aspect, but very diminutive head, who needlessly introduced himself as the cook, as he wore the established costume of that dignitary. He enlivened our graver duties by volunteering, on the slightest hints, scraps, they might be called paragraphs, of history which seemed to have no connection between themselves, but to be producible at will. He could

tell you that "William Rufus was crowned in 1087, and killed in 1100, by Walter Tyrrel, while hunting in the New Forest of Hampshire; when the forest laws made it worse to kill a deer than a man." Then, caught by some word in conversation, he would interpose "Waterloo fought 18th June 1815, French commanded by Napoleon Bonaparte, English by Wellington, two greatest commanders of the age;" or, "on approach of the French, Russians set fire to capital city, Moscow, when 11,840 houses were consumed, besides palaces and churches, and the French entered over smouldering ruins. This happened on the 14th Septemoer, 1812." Our pleasant lecturer parted from us with a promise to meet us again, intimating that he acted in Punch and Judy, and that Tom, to whom he pointed, sang in the Choir and the Concerts. Tom proved to be a ricketty crookback, with gentle but ungainly physiognomy, but who possessed the singular power of repeating from recollection almost endless chapters of the Bible and passages from Shakespeare, which had been read to him in infancy, but of which it was very doubtful that he comprehended the meaning. Jim stared with amazement and growing humility on these prodigies, and so distinctly felt his own inferiority that he muttered, "Neither I nor any other boy with us could do it." We now entered the nurseries and hospitals, where Jim whispered, in a somewhat quiet tone, "I know very well that these little bodies are not fairies, but must be dwarfs, pigmies, or these smart fellows that live in Lilliput that I read a book about last Christmas. It was by a Dean, must be true, you know." These dormitories are large, lofty, well lighted, but perfectly shaded, contain long rows of exquisitely clean and cosy iron cribs or cradles, and besides all the furnishings necessary in sickness and feebleness, pictures, and flowers, and pets, and toys, to engage and cheer the languid thought; and there were arranged comfortably, well-dressed, judiciously superintended, the lowest links of the human chain; those who roll and those who rock, those who cannot swallow unless the morsel be introduced into the throat, those who howl, and the blind, deaf, and senseless creature, incessantly pawing the air, as if to find the external world of which he has obtained some faint concep-

tion, and who rests quiet and tranquil whenever he can grasp the warm hand of a living being. But we saw there likewise helpless forms resembling in many points the frog, the goose, and other lower animals, and the disease-stricken, and lastly, one withered and wasted little form hastening on to death. Our stay in these sad domiciles of sorrow and suffering was not long, but Jim was evidently more subdued, the majesty of approaching death had revealed to him more clearly the humanity, perhaps the mutilated humanity, of the beings by whom we had been surrounded, and he questioned, in very humble terms, "Are they the same as we?" We were next invited to join a party for pastime in a public apartment. Our approach was heralded by tuck of drum and shrill fife, but on our admission all was quiet and unconversational. Immediately on our entrance I was challenged by a tall spoon-bill lad to a game at draughts. My companion was first fixed upon by our old acquaintance the cook, now dizened in a very smart and different array, who, as if in reference to some of those present, oracularly ejaculated, "Father Mabillon, born 1632, died 1707, was just like one of us till he was twenty-eight, then tumbled down stairs, cracked his skull, was trepanned, and then became a learned critical theologian, and was the writer of a great many large books." He was next introduced to Alexander, perhaps because they were both boys, who was of a sickly, feeble organisation, with a large head and a body apparently incapable of building itself up, and a sluggish temperament, of about 14 years old. Nevertheless, he possessed a spark of special genius in the rapid solving of arithmetical problems. Mentally, and although from his pallid and exhausted appearance he seemed to be in the very clutch of death, he told in twenty-five seconds how many moments Jim had lived, the date of his birth being given. This proved to be correct, making due allowance for the leap-years. He was asked "Supposing a railway waggon to be 12 feet long, 7 feet 4 inches broad, and 3 feet 2 inches high, how many barley corns would it hold, reckoning 27 to the cubic inch?" The correct answer was given in thirty-one seconds, and without any other explanation than that "it came into his head." There next approached a lumpish lad, deaf and dumb, whose intellect had been starved

and stunted, both by his original infirmity and by his occupation as a shepherd in a remote and mountainous district, until the torch of science had gleaned in upon the darkened chambers of his mind and awakened the slumbering and, till then, the unborn energies of vigorous and poetic power. Upon being questioned by the familiar finger language, "What is gratitude?" —he immediately answered "The memory of the heart." When asked "What is time?" he said, "A line that has two ends; a path which begins in the cradle and ends in the tomb: and eternity is a day without yesterday or to-morrow, a line that has no end." To the crucial inquiry "What is God?" he at once rejoined, "The necessary being, the sun of eternity, the mechanist of nature, the eye of justice, the watchmaker of the universe, the soul of the world." Poor Jim, utterly astounded by the mode of colloquy and the replies as they were interpreted to him, took shelter from his confusion by my side. Just at this moment, and greatly to my annoyance, a voice whispered in my ear "Gonelli, the blind sculptor of Carnbassie, sculptured the statue of Cosmo, the first Grand Duke of Tuscany, and died under the pontificate of Urban the VIII." It is well known that many men of very limited intellect display a keen perception of plan, progressive evolution, and of means to an end in the game of draughts, and I experienced this to my sad cost, and I cherish to this day a vivid and humiliating recollection of the discomfort and shame felt on finding myself utterly discomfited, and on noticing the exultation of my child-like antagonist, and the laughs and screams of delight—Christopher North would have called them guffaws—of the surrounding confraternity. The hour, and perhaps my defeat, admonished us that our visit must terminate, and we hurried down through the pleasant shrubberies, but cast a momentary glance at stragglers as they wended their way slowly along the paths, dragging toy horses and carts, and laden with hoes, barrows, and other implements, which they had been attempting to use in gardening, and paused for an instant on passing a Gymnasium, where acrobats of various sizes were using the poles, ropes, and swings provided, with considerable dexterity. Jim's fancy and admiration were arrested. "Well," he almost sighed, "they do nearly as well as

our fellows, and I see now that they are neither fairies nor hob-goblins, but ugly little chaps whom they wish to make into men." This was evidently the point for the Transformation scene. "Yes," I told Jim, "all the creatures whom you have seen and wondered at are Idiots, many of them without home or friends as well as without sense, but who have been admitted into this magnificent domain, who have had imparted to them by training the gifts and capacities which you have witnessed, and who may yet be raised nearer to your own level, but who can never reach the point at which you will arrive when a man. They are the poorest of the poor. You are rich in every blessing but may become in mind as poor as they are." "Tell you what," exclaimed the boy, affected as much as such a boy and a holiday boy could be affected, "I'll get Papa to come here, give them a glorious blow out, and my allowance for a year."

V.

THE SNOW WREATH.

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage."—*Lovelace.*

My path lay across the field of Culloden. It is now a partially cultivated moor, where there is scarcely a trace of the great struggle, or momentous events, which once animated its surface; and where, without the aid of map-maker or the imagination, it would be vain to call up the kilted clans, or martial array, or to conceive that military men should have chosen such a spot for a decisive battle between undisciplined masses armed with the broadsword and regular troops wielding the musket. But yet I could hear the pibroch, I could in fancy see where the M'Donalds and the MacPhersons were stationed, where the M'Intoshes rushed on that deadly onslaught with the wild coronach which told of the issue of that cause for which they died. I could mark the ruined barn where the wounded Highlanders were burned alive, and the spot where the gallant

Keppoch, that Bayard of Celtic cavaliers, gave up his life for his country and his king, and yet my feelings and opinions had but a slight infusion of romantic Jacobitism in them. I have always looked upon that terrible calamity less as a duel between two royal races, less as the last war between individual prowess and organised bodies of combatants, less as, fortunately, the last occasion upon which nations of the same land could meet each other in mortal military conflict, than as a final and fatal struggle between two widely different and irreconcilable forms of society, between the social and the family patriarchal, between men living under the bond of abstract law and men living under the bond of love and kindred; and that tie of clanship as seen through the mind of a Lochiel, and as embodied in his practice, or his sway, brings us nearer to an Arcadia than Saxon poets dream of. But this, its beauties and its blemishes, were stamped out in the slaughter and defeat of Culloden. The race remains, but its characteristics, the frame-work by which it was held together, the deep passionate love of home, kith and kin, and clan, and chief, are almost utterly obliterated, even the recollection, and certainly the comprehension, of the cause for which they fought and fell. Of these brave, perhaps misguided, men whose bodies filled the trenches over which the public road now passes in that dreary hill track, all traces have faded away, and to their descendants the beliefs, the convictions, the fears, the hopes, even the habits, which gave them a prominent and almost national dignity, are unknown and unappreciated. The fusion of peoples may be wise, and salutary to mankind in general, but we cannot resist the temptation to speculate and even to mourn on the disappearance of large communities noble in loyalty, in language, even in literature, of their passing into the class of conquered, or degenerate or forgotten races, and of their leaving the land which they loved and ruled without a monument or a memorial of their existence, except it may be a corpse-cairn or the tradition of an obscure and shadowy feud. These saddening reflections swelled up into my very throat, and seemed to acquire a vivid and awful personification when, trudging down into the valley of the Nairn, I stood upon that wondrous graveyard of Clava. This is a vast meadow, green,

where it is not covered with blocks or piles of stone, and gray with rude and lichen-covered slabs, where the grass, and the gowan, and the heather do not grow. At first glance it appears a morraine, an irregular causeway, or irregular heaps of rocks borne into and left in their present places by some mighty torrent, or the bursting of some upland lake; but on closer examination, order and design rise in many places before you. There are circles, sometimes regularly, sometimes vaguely, marked out. There are monoliths or standing stones, there are slabs like the rude sepulchral monuments of our ancestors, there are enormous cairns, fifteen or twenty feet above the level of the surrounding field, and around and amid all these are boulders, and blocks, and broken pillars, which must originally have had some, though an undiscoverable, connection with the erections amid which they lie; a few of these mounds of stones, such are the longings after the secrets of the past, have been carefully removed, and thus have been laid bare bee-hive-looking chambers, so entire, although uncemented, that the dome, the dimensions, and their ingenious structure, can be readily traced. It is rumoured that when curiosity or scientific inquiry laid bare these ancient dwellings, or tombs, there were found under the floor earthen vessels containing bones which perished during the excavations, and which, at all events, yielded up no revelations of the place, its history, its purposes, possessors, or even the superstitions with which it is still associated. All is eternal silence and ignorance in that solitary Strath, and yet the few surrounding inhabitants look upon it with awe and reverence, for reverence remains longer than history, call it a City of the Dead, and there still place the remains of their unchristened children. When formerly I strolled among these time consecrated monuments seeking for scratches, spectacle ornaments, or other markings by the hands of those who were supposed to sleep below, I invariably encountered in one of the half uncovered buildings which have been mentioned, a squalid, but good-humoured lad, who was constantly engaged in tossing three or four pebbles in the air, which he made desperate efforts and grimaces to catch, but invariably failed in his aim and object. He had a large head, which was uncovered; his features were

small, his body long but lithe, and his legs and arms proportionally short and curved, the eyes were bright but very small, the hair blond, the skin of marble whiteness and visible at various points, as he was carelessly enveloped in a piece of ragged tartan, which was rather wound round his chest and limbs than divided into the ordinary portions of jacket and kilt, and yet, though grotesque, he was of pleasing aspect. On our first meeting he guided us faithfully on our way, although we knew not a word of his dialect, and there was established betwixt us a sort of friendship, chiefly because we laughed merrily as he did over his gesticulations when clutching his precious pebbles, and because his reward was of the sweetest and the daintiest. To-day he was not in his accustomed place, and I was obliged to visit that enormous boulder, which resembles in size, and even somewhat in shape, the cottages of the district, and to scramble up the ascent which forms the wall of the valley opposite to Culloden, unenlivened by his gambols. Upon the highest part of this ridge there are scattered four or five houses of very humble and unpoetic aspect. One of these, which was my destination, was particularly solitary and bare; there were no offices, no garden, no green thing except the turf and one scraggy elder-bush struggling for existence from the scanty soil at the back of the dwelling, and, doubtless, planted there to secure protection from witches, and warlocks, and unclean spirits. From the hillock upon which I stood an immense extent of wild and mountain land could be surveyed, teeming with tales and traditions as gloriously tinted as the clouds which then rested on their summits, but conveying nothing to those who usually gazed on them save impressions of barrenness and cold and poverty. Behind the house the road, after passing a very insecure foot-bridge, wound like a cork-screw through a long and verdant valley, which was ultimately lost in the recesses of a range of higher hills. Before reaching the door, I paused to examine a curious enclosure, the object of which I could not then divine. It consisted of a space of about twenty feet square, surrounded by poles about twelve or fourteen feet in height, these being firmly fixed in the earth and bound together by numerous cross railings. You could see through the chinks

that the space within had been trodden into a circular pathway, upon which lay a large round stone. During my survey of this pen I was suddenly grasped and firmly held by some one from behind, whose gibbering and caressing reminded me of a bear-hug. On turning I discovered that my assailant was a girl of somewhat diminutive size, but thin, wiry, and powerful. Her features were prominent, but had it not been for the smallness of her head, which did not exceed, I believe, fourteen inches in circumference, she might have been regarded as a starvling in premature decay. Her look, her manner, and all her subsequent conduct, revealed her as an incarnation of lust, of vanity, and of fury. She clung to me with such tenacity that I was enabled to note how neatly and coquettishly her sere and sordid tartan dress was arranged, how she had plaited her long reddish hair, and disposed among its folds a few of the flowers which grew around. But I was more deeply impressed by the fact that her waist was encircled by a coarse rope which connected her with the interior of her home, which might be twenty or thirty yards in length, to which narrow range her partial liberty was confined. I was speedily relieved from her embraces by the approach of her mother, who, being likewise a person of slight and insignificant frame, evidently trusted more to the knob-stick or formidable speock which she carried in her hand than to mere authority in subduing that wild outburst of passion, and in securing the obedience which immediately followed her appearance. The girl ran impetuously to the door, yelling and threatening, but keeping a watchful eye upon the movements of her parent. I looked, and muttered my astonishment and curiosity at the scene which had passed before me, and, by the aid of an interpreter, understood the mother to say, pointing to the cudgel in her hand, "Aye, we could not get on without it, she sometimes would kill us in her rage, is ever restless and ruthless, and will not even sit down, except when the gudeman plays the fiddle, and then she is quiet and gentle as a lamb." On demanding the purpose for which the fold, beside which I still stood, had been constructed, I was told that it was to keep Cary from running away and from hurting the neighbours when the rope was taken off. There she spent

the long summer days more happy than at other times, rushing round the circle, trundling the large stone in the same course, or sitting upon it while she crooned a few bars of the tunes which her father played to her. "She is like a bird, sir, and sings best when the sun rises or sets." I now went into the house, which, although consisting of only one apartment, was practically divided into two, by ranges of box-beds placed back to back, and facing the opposite gables of the tenement. All within was clean and more comfortable than could have been expected, but the tenant broke stones upon the road, had a cow on the brae, a few sheep up the glen, and was evidently a careful, well-to-do cottar. A large peat-fire blazed upon the hearth, surrounded, however, by a rude fence, while every window, and door, and crevice, and cranny were bolted, or barred, or stuffed, but whether to defeat the machinations of Cary or to exclude the winter winds, which here blow both "fast and furious;"—indeed, this was called the hill of the winds—I did not ascertain. There stood Cary upon a stool, mingling advances and addresses to the strangers with vindictive menaces towards her mother but ever solicitous to smooth her hair and to retain the flowers with which it was ornamented in a becoming position. It now appeared that the rope, which lay in coils upon the floor, was actually fastened to the interior of her bed, to which she could retire at pleasure, and where she passed many hours of each day in deep and death-like slumber. Upon the side of this very snug and tidy cupboard I was struck by seeing arranged an ominous series of chains, handcuffs, muffs, and a straight-jacket; while in the corner of the room there stood a sort of chair, or box, in which a person could be inclosed and firmly retained, and which was obviously a winter domicile for the restraint of poor Cary. The perplexity, and probably the indignation, betrayed by my words, as well as my expression, drew from the mother the pathetic explanation, "Aye, sir, you don't know Cary. She is my child certainly, but I often think that she is possessed, and that either the devil or the spirit of a wild beast has entered into her, and it is strange, for all the other bairns, though not very clear or clever, were peaceable and biddable, and then our forbears, and I knew them all for gen-

erations, as the gudeman and I were cousins, were all decent and respectable folk. But this lassie screamed and scratched when she was in the cradle, and she would now destroy any of us, or any living thing, so we cannot keep hens or pigs near the homestead, as she would kill them as she has done before. Then she would leave us in a moment, flee across the country, making friends with the first person she met, and never return, nor think more of the mother that bore her. We have had to raise the whole glen and follow her for miles and miles, and then after what happened to Hamish," here her voice faltered, and, I could not mistake it, there was a tear upon the old withered cheek, she continued, "it was the doctor who told us to get these things," pointing to the armoury hung on the partition, "but nothing has answered so well as the rope. It does not hurt her, it prevents her from escaping and doing mischief, and yet it gives her as much liberty as she can be trusted with. That and this stick have often saved our lives and limbs, as well as her own, and, though I am loth to punish or pain her, I would rather do both than lose her as I did dear Hamish." But who then was Hamish? After many swayings of the body to and fro, quiet sobs, and perhaps tears, and other signs of abiding sorrow, I found that the object of this deep feeling was the imbecile youth of whom I had formed the acquaintance in the ruins of Clava; that he was the eldest son of this afflicted family, that although ineducable and unproductive, he was cheerful, docile, and they thought devout, and the joy and source of mirth at his own hearth and at the many others where he ever received a cordial welcome. This lad had been the errand-goer and the letter-carrier of the district, and, although he spoke imperfectly, he knew every road and house, and inhabitant, and his missions were so invariably performed with fidelity and exactitude that he was occasionally entrusted with money and other valuables. "One day last winter," such was the mother's narrative, "the minister wished to send a letter to the head of the glen, and there was nobody that would or could take the message, for the snow had fallen and was falling, except Hamish. I gave him his Sunday clothes, I put huggers upon his legs, and a pair of his father's old brogues upon his

feet, and made him as warm and cosy as I could. He started in the afternoon with a piece in one hand, but throwing up with the other the white stones from which he never parted, which the wicked people said were knuckle-bones which he had dug from the graves in Clava, and he danced and sang merrily as he looked back to me from the bridge across the burn. Night fell, and with it heavy blinding snow, and the wind howled, and Cary would not sleep, but we thought that the farmer to whom the boy carried the letter must have sheltered him from the storm, and that he would return when daylight would show him the track of his footsteps. We wearied, and wondered, and hoped, and feared, and put a rush-light in the little window-bole that looks up the glen; and the dawn came, but no Hamish. It was the terrible storm of 18—, when the snow lay to the depth of four or five feet for six weeks in all these parts. Day followed day, but we still cheered ourselves by the thought that the bairn was in good quarters, and might be happy and merry among the shepherds and the maidens, but we ever burned the rushlight at night. Frost fixed the snow like a layer of rock upon the earth, and a man came down over its hard and shining surface and told us that Hamish had delivered the letter, had left the steading about gloaming, and in time to reach our place before nightfall; but he knew no more. We wandered over the country far and wide. We visited every house, every friend, we tracked every step and mark, and everybody was kind and helped in the search, for they all loved Hamish; but no trace or tiding could be found of the poor silly boy. We were sure he was dead, but yet we looked for and expected him hour after hour, and still burned the rush-light at night to guide his weary footstep to his home and his people. Spring time came, and the soft winds blew, and the tussilago and the saugh budded and blinked over the burn and the snow melted away, except among the hills. Again we sought for our lost child, and at length and last we found him, stark and stiff in a snow wreath. Blinded by the drift, he had strayed far from the farm, and worn out with struggling, and drowsy, he had lain down on the sheltered side of a whin bush, been covered deep with the wild whirling snow, and

fallen on that sleep that knows no waking. He had rolled up his plaid as a pillow, put himself in the position he always occupied in his own warm bed, and had, we thought, never wakened to know the passage between living and dying. In the folds of his jacket was the Bible he always carried, though he could not read it, which the minister gave him, and his frozen hand held the four white chuckie-stones which you have seen him play with." After a solemn pause, she looked to me imploringly, and asked—"Can you blame me for the rope and the speock?" I did not blame her.

No. VI.

Done to Death.

"For evil is done by want of heart,
As well as by want of head."—*Hood.*

I was conversing with an Inspector of Schools the other day, when he laid before me some startling truths. He told me that the children of the rich and the educated classes were more easily taught than those of the poor and the illiterate; that if the pupils in a school be draughted from dark, and dirty, and ill-ventilated closes and alleys, if they be half starved, ill-clothed, and ill-cared for they make infinitely less progress, whatever the merits and exertions of the teacher may be, than when they inhabit well-built, well-situate, and comfortable houses, partake of substantial fare, and are familiar with cleanliness and decency; he even asserted that the position and surroundings of the rooms where they assembled, and the purity of the atmosphere which they breathed, exercised an appreciable influence on their capacity and acquirements. He said, further, that after carefully examining hundreds of schools for both sexes and all ages, he was convinced, and his opinion was corroborated by the experience of the masters, that there were, in every forty or fifty of these children, several who could not be instructed, who were incapable of receiving even the most elementary knowledge, and who, after endless struggles, much sorrow and suffering on both sides, and great impediment to the general movement of the groups

of which they were members, sunk either into sullen and sleepy indifference, or into a state of chronic rebellion, or of nervous despair. According to the temper and penetration of the teachers, he averred, these dullards—or, according to the French, these enfants arrierés—were either severely punished or left to their own stupid devices; and yet they were often adepts at all muscular exercises, they could do with their hands what the heads of half a dozen cleverer creatures failed to accomplish, and were, practically, the most useful and industrious workers in field and garden and in various manly arts. The lash, and threats, and terror had, he was certain, converted many a mere simpleton into a fool or an invalid; and he then quoted an instance from the reports of a friend where the consequences had been more sad and serious if this could be so.

About the year 1794, there was a weak-minded stripling attached to the kitchen staff of an opulent proprietor in a country district. He was well-disposed, obedient, obliging; he ran all the messages, he carried all the heavy burdens, he did all the dirty drudgery and whatever the other menials disliked or declined to do. The imagination of all men even in flunkeydom was at this period heated, if not horrified, by the atrocities of the French Revolution, and as the newspapers were handed down from my lady's maid and the butler to the cook and the scullions, current events and opinions had displaced the innocent gossip and ghost stories which formerly formed the staple subjects of interest. Jamie knew nothing of all this, but was stricken with shame and fear when accused upon one occasion of having lagged by the way, forgotten half his message, played pitch-farthing on the road, and for having committed various grave crimes and misdemeanours for which he must be instantly tried and punished. Amid great noise and merriment a Committee of Public Safety was at once improvised; the members sat round the long table in the centre of the kitchen. The President had his hair powdered from the dredge-box, certain of his assessors arrayed themselves in sheets, turned their coats inside out, &c., while the trembling bewildered lad was placed at their bar, guarded by two housemaids, who shouldered

broomsticks. He was arraigned for incivism, emegrantism, or some such offences, all equally unintelligible to him ; the process was conducted as rapidly and recklessly as if it had been before the sanguinary tribunal of which this was a mirthful imitation, and with the same invariable result, as the victim was condemned to instant death by the guillotine. The instrument was at hand, and consisted of the large block of wood upon which meat was divided, and the cleaver used for this purpose by the master of the sauce pans, who stood in a formidable attitude ready to carry the sentence into execution. The trembling bewildered simpleton was ordered to kneel down and passively obeyed, the boon of having his eyes bandaged having been previously conceded. When he laid his head upon the block he was observed to clutch it convulsively with his hands, but this was the only emotion noticed. After a soleman pause, a wet towel was drawn across his throat and neck, and a ringing cheer announced that the execution was over. Jamie did not rise, nor respond, nor speak, and when raised fell down "motionless and dead." My friend's narrative recalled a sad chapter in my own early life which I recounted in return, and as an illustration of some of his own views. When I was about ten or twelve years old I was sent to a crack school in the South, where thirty or forty of us were to be prepared for winning the honours of the University and the world. The mansion was a large, long manor house which had been somewhat disfigured and diverted from its original purpose by the erection of a range of unornamental buildings behind, which contained the school-rooms, dormitories, and private rooms for such of the boarders as could pay for them, and which gave the whole, when seen from a particular point, the appearance of a patched-up cross. The front was, however, smart and cheery, and even venerable, the walls had been built of red and yellow bricks alternately, the colours of which had been greatly softened by years, and still more by the creepers and fruit trees, green in summer and golden and scarlet in autumn; and there were stone lintels and porches, upon which had been cut texts, and mottoes, and initials; and there was a dial with four faces, and beyond it a pond, with a jet of water, like a

plume of feathers in the middle, where the carp used to come to be fed, and one large fellow, with a collar round his neck declaring that he was a hundred years old, was said by the smaller boys to wag his tail when he got the largest morsel; and further off still there was a large garden with portions for each of us, with lots of shrubs, and flowers, and fruit, which was, of course, purloined, although we had as much to eat at table as was good for us. Then on one side of this there was a cricket field, on the other a gymnasium, and there were paddocks for ponies, and sheep, and pets. In the country around there were copses where we nutted, streams where we fished, hills where we went a-gipsying, and beautiful lanes where those who had ponies could ride. It was upon the whole a pretty, comfortable place, where we were well fed, well-cared for, and treated like gentlemen, where the matron was a mother indeed, with a kind word to soothe every sickness and sorrow, and a cake or a comfit, or a plaster for every aching bone and back, and where the rector, although a good deal of a dignified don, was condescending, courteous, even amiable, everywhere else except in the school. There his nature seemed to change. He was there a tyrant, a terror, an inexorable drill and crammer, who conceived that flogging was the grand remedy for ignorance, that ignorance was but another name for obstinacy and insubordination, that all boys were intended to be Senior Wranglers, and that under his system they could be made so. That system consisted in imposing tasks of enormous length, in incessant repetitions under the fear of the lash, and in bare and bald instruction in the classics, unenlivened and unenlightened by illustration, historical or moral. He could overlook a delinquency, but he could not pardon a false quantity, he might forgive our absence from prayers, but he was transported into ungovernable fury when we forgot our lines from Virgil or Horace in the morning. When not engaged in teaching, he was accustomed to sit much in his study, which, from a large dormer window in the roof, commanded the whole of the garden and play-grounds, which we used to call Cyclops, but he was never known to leave his watch-tower, even when we were committing all manner of

mischief, breaking his fences, stealing the peaches, or had a good round or two of boxing amongst ourselves. Any day that you entered the cricket field you might have seen, while all the rest of us were busy in bowling, or batting, or guarding wickets, a solitary boy leaning his back upon a tree, and always the same tree, with his hands clapsed over his head, and his eyes fixed upon the leaves above, as if he were gazing at the birds, or the sunlight, or the wind. These eyes were the queerest thing about Charlie, they were not ugly, but they twinkled, and rolled, and squinted, but no one could tell whether he was looking at you or not, and whether he understood what you said to him. He was a short, squat, plump little fellow, well-born, and had as many friends as fingers, and had, I recollect, as we envied him much, a pony, and an apartment to himself. He was the fag, the drole, the pet of the school. He could do everything that hands or feet or boyish strength could accomplish, he would have even played cricket had we ordered him, but he could not steady his eye in order to see the ball. He was, I daresay, oppressed, overworked, and made sometimes to stand vicariously in our places when horsing was apprehended, but, in the main, he was loved, shielded, and kindly treated, and everyone was anxious to help him in getting up his lessons, which he never could do unassisted, and often failed to do when ground and coached by the best of us. I think that outside and amongst us the dear little blockhead was perfectly happy, but in school his life was a long misery. The rector hated him as a perverse dolt, imposed longer and more difficult tasks upon him than upon his clever companions, and then thrashed him as he became duller, or as it was the fashion to call it more dogged. The child, I am now convinced, could not fix his eyes long enough upon the book to learn what it contained. He could sit still, motionless, but he could not think out a meaning for five minutes together, nor could he recollect a line of his own language which he had to commit, far less the words of one which he did not understand, especially when couched in Greek pothooks, which he could not decipher. He struggled hard against his infirmities; he wished to learn and to please his friends and the rector, I believe he did his best,

and I have often heard him at night jumbling up scraps and phrases of to-morrow's task with his short prayers. One day we were visited by an Oxford Fellow, who, after examining several sharp boys, selected Charlie, whom he affirmed was the image of Professor P——, and who must accordingly be a genius. Poor Charlie knew neither the meaning of the joke nor of the questions which were, gently enough, addressed to him. He became confused, utterly broke down, and was ordered to the pœna seat. The Oxford man had scarcely departed when the rector rushed into the schoolroom trembling and livid with passion, and armed with a long thick whip or cane, I know not which. Charlie seemed instinctively to know his doom, flew upstairs, pursued by the infuriated and, as he believed himself to be, disgraced teacher, in the hope, perhaps, of reaching his own little cell, or of screening himself under his bed-clothes. What curious materials school boys are made of; we almost enjoyed the chase; but the sound and shrieks which followed told us what was going on, and that it was not a time for fun and frolic. The cries were at first loud and piercing, then they seemed to be muffled, then so low and moaning that you could hear the strokes of the whip, and then all the noise ceased. The rector returned pale and haggard, dismissed the school without a word or an announcement as to night lessons, and we all went to cricket. In the evening most of us crept softly to Charlie's door to give him some comfort, or to carry up some dainty, or source of consolation, but the door was locked, he did not answer, but we could hear now and then, at long intervals, a sob or a sigh through the key-hole. Next morning we heard that Charlie was dead—there was a Coroner's inquest, a trial; school was broken up, you know the rest; but when I hear of stupid children, or when I am out of sorts, or sad and sorrowful, I cannot shut out from my ears the low sobs and sighs which came that night through the key-hole of Charlie's door.

FINIS.

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