

OUR MONTHLY.

A

RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER—1873.

ADMINISTRATION OF CHINESE LAW.

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IN law, language, literature and its whole civilization, China is so different from what we see in the West that there is a temptation to regard it as almost beyond the pale of Divine Providence. But God has been working His own purposes here as well as elsewhere during the past centuries of seclusion, and solving problems which have respect to the future history of the world. It may not be so clear just what lessons are to be learned from China, but who can doubt that when the histories of all nations are gathered into one great book, a very important section will be given to this, the most ancient and populous of the lands of the East?

There is implied in the very title of this article a state of civilization and a wide remove from barbarism. Where there is law, and especially a written code, and even where its outward forms are to any extent observed, a shield is thrown over society, protecting it from tyranny and oppression. The subject might be confined to the present and the practical operation of the courts; but it will be better understood by taking a brief survey of the general subject—the law itself and the relation of the government to the people.

If we transport ourselves back in imagination a few centuries to the scenes in which our own ancestors moved, we shall be compelled to moderate our feelings of surprise and indignation in view of many facts which Chinese law presents for our consideration. Instead of making the state of modern Christendom our standard, we should do well to bring to mind the superstitious practices of our forefathers—the unjust laws of the state, and the horrible cruelties of the Inquisition, which we know existed in Europe to within a period comparatively modern. We shall find much in Chinese law to demand our admiration, and by no means shall we be compelled always to disapprove.

Let us then inquire briefly what is Chinese law, by whom administered, and what is the character of its administration. As to Chinese law, we can only glance at its history, present form and fundamental idea. It has a very ancient history.

Perhaps it may be said that the definite and formal existence of the law of China dates from the period about two hundred years before the Christian era—since there is an account of its being arranged in nine parts or sections by *Sin Ho*, one

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the difference is as great as between heaven and earth, just the difference between the human and the divine.

The testimony of the state of the world to-day, as is that of all history, is just that of the word of God: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Without the gospel of Jesus Christ there is no reform. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The missionary is the true apostle of modern progress. Western civilization would be no boon

to China without the gospel, but an open Bible and a living faith are indeed the only want of this great and interesting people. It is no cant to say they are perishing for this want; one needs but to go into the courts and look at the administration of the laws to feel it.

Divine pity and Christian love—these are the wants of the Chinese people! The United States, England and Germany must come to the rescue. It is the great call of God to these nations. Not your customs, secular ideas, your goods or your science,—but your glorious gospel of Christ,—give it to China.

A CHRISTMAS FANTASY.

BY MRS. JULIA M'NAIR WRIGHT.

AT Christmas time all properly constituted parents seek for gifts to deck the Christmas tree. Children go forth in bands to bring greenery and clusters of frost-painted berries to dress out their homes; and into the Magazine offices the Story Tellers bring their sheaves of stories, that shall be read around the Christmas fires, and serve to increase the general joy.

I had mine from the Owl. He brought it to me yesterday in haste, just after dinner.

"Who are you, and what do you come for?" I asked, as he sat winking on the back of a chair.

"I am the Chancellor from Arundel Castle, and I bring your Christmas story for the *Monthly*."

"How did you know there was any *Monthly*?" I asked.

The Owl was offended, ruffled out his neck feathers, and shut his eyes. I remembered what the poet had written—

"If in daylight he opens his eyes by chance,
He shuts them again, with a satisfied
glance,
For the light of the sun makes all things
dim,
And the light within is enough for him."

"I beg your pardon," I said humbly, for I hoped my story might come from that inner light.

The Owl was pleased. He fixed his red eyes, drooped his big wings until they fell around him like a professor's robe; he looked as if he had lived during all time, and had seen everything. This is the story of the Chancellor Owl of Arundel.

In this very December, in the time when the flower-spirits have carried the flowers to the palaces of the gnomes underground, and the little birds have sung themselves southward, and the butterflies have slidden down the golden beams into the west, to suck the sweets of Hesperides, which now butterflies alone can find; in December, when the sunshine is pale lemon color, the sky mostly gray, the air sown thick with frost needles; when the rime sparkles on the roadsides, and leaves and grass crackle under the feet of men; when the midnight zenith is a glittering steel blue; when far up north icicles hang in sharp, shining daggers, and the great billows of snow are drifted and rolled everywhere, like a sea lashed to foam, at this very

time Little Bo Peep sat in her ninth story room, that story which is nearest the stars, but not always the farthest removed from earthly trouble. Little Bo Peep had lived here ever since the pastoral age when people kept shepherdesses had passed away; she never grows old, and is never really unhappy, but sometimes a great longing comes into her heart to be once more in the old scenes and share the old ways.

On this December evening she sat before her little fire; she wore a blue gown, with a white kerchief about her neck; she had on wooden shoes and red check stockings, and her hair, like spun glass flashing in the firelight, hung all about her as a veil.

Tap, tap, tap, came a sound on her door.

"Enter!" cried Bo Peep, and in came the Three Wise Men of Gotham, who once went to sea in a bowl,—little old fellows, in topboots bigger than themselves, and red flannel waistcoats reaching to their knees; they had also hats like candle extinguishers.

"We are come to tea," said the Three Wise Men. "for it is Christmas time."

"In that case," replied Bo Peep, "you are welcome to the best I have. Come to the fire, and let us prepare supper."

They four sat around the blazing grate. It was all the more cheerful because the wind howled among the chimney-pots, and the sleet had clung to the beards of the Men of Gotham when they came in.

Bo Peep took a dish of butter and put it to melt, while she toasted slices of a little white loaf, and dipped them therein. One of the Wise Men took a store of apples from his pocket and set them to roast by the fire; the second guest drew from his leather pouch a wedge of cheese, and began toasting pieces on a long stick; the third visitor had under his arm the famous bowl in which he and his companions went to sea; and in it he prepared to make some hot lemonade. Thus you see they were all busy getting ready the feast, and were all jolly and sociable, as people who are not troubled about the fashions and ceremonies of life are wont to be.

"We will be very happy," said Bo Peep, "for this is Christmas."

"Christmas to the English," said one Wise Man, "but with the Scotch it is called Yule-tide."

"And the French call it Noel," said his neighbor.

"And the Norsemen call it Joel," said the Wisest Man of all.

"Don't mention Norsemen, or I shall be heart-sick for the old days," said Bo Peep. "This is the grand revel of Valhalla."

"Now," said her friend on the right, "all the ice palaces ring with shouts, and the ancients feast, all but Baldur's mother."

"It is because," began the Gothamite on the left, "because the God of the seasons has paused in his fearful career toward cold and darkness; he repents himself; his rein looses on the neck of his steeds; his chariot wheels turn slowly; he stops; he alters his course, he faces about; once more he is coming back to restore light, heat and beauty to a weary world."

"It is of all others the *home season*," said the stoutest man from Gotham. "Now if people have anything domestic in their hearts, they show it. The mothers prepare a feast, the fathers buy toys, the children dream dreams and fancy impossible things."

"In Lapland and in Russia," said his neighbor, taking up the theme, "Saint Nicholas drives about in a sledge, and now all get presents, from princes to paupers; and who knows where they come from?"

"But it is still better in Germany," said a Wise Man who had been there. "There the beautiful Christ-child flies about on white wings, a crown of light on his head. He makes the darkest places bright even hearts, at other times hard and cold; he blesses all the children lying in their beds, and leaves so many blessings that the fruits that grow on the wax-lighted tree are the least of all."

"Come!" cried Bo Peep, starting up, "let us go abroad in this-home time, and visit all manner of homes. We yet can

use our magic coaches once a year, and now the time has come. What do you all say, Men of Gotham?"

"After supper," said the fat man; "it would be a pity to miss the toasted cheese."

"And we will go warmer for the hot lemonade," said Bo Peep, as she began to spread the table.

"Bo Peep," said the cat, rising from the hearth, "I will prepare the magic coach, but remember you cannot go very far abroad, because of that day you strayed from your sheep, and they lost their tails. Also take my advice, and see the most ancient first."

"Since the cat is driver," said all the company, "we will follow her guidance."

In a very little time Bo Peep and the Three Men from Gotham were whirling along through the air, under the clear twinkling stars, while all the world seemed asleep beneath them.

They heard the thunders of the Irish Sea, tearing the cliffs into caverns, and grottoes, and fantastic pinnacles; they saw the white crests of the warring waves, and listened to them defying winds and shores. Then they rested on the southern slope of a cliff, where the heather that had been pink and purple in the autumn was now dead; where the gorse had lost its golden plumes and was blackened by the frosts, and the prone ferns were dead and brown.

A little line of snow lay under the edges of some circular stone walls. There were doorways in the wall looking southwards, but the roofs which twelve hundred years ago had covered these homes were long since carried away. The eldest of the Wise Men from Gotham was an antiquary; he sat on a stone broken from one of these walls, and thus held discourse:

"See now how the ancestors of nineteenth century people lived. Behold these circles, fifteen feet in diameter, as many feet high in the centre no doubt, shaped like beehives. No fires, no separate apartments. You are standing on some calcined stones, Bo Peep; they did their cooking with those, heating them red hot, and dropping them into a

pot where the flesh was to be boiled. They did their cooking and warmed themselves at a fire in the open air; if they had a boar to roast, they buried it in the ground, in a hole lined with stones, heated with hot embers, and he who could kill the most wild animals for food and for defence was the best fellow. How much trouble do you suppose it was to get fire in those days, men of Gotham? If ever you have tried to obtain the needed spark by rubbing sticks, or pounding flint, you will no longer wonder that fire was the choice gift Prometheus was fabled to bring from Heaven. Furnished with clubs and with rude implements of flint, these men killed and flayed elk, oxen, bears and wolves; they dug caves, cut down trees, cut up peat, hewed out posts, and managed to scrape up the ground somehow to sow a little grain. Mostly they lived by hunting and fishing, and you may guess that they were neither as beaux nor belles elaborately dressed. All the feeble ones died early of hardships, and the hardy grew up as tough as their sires, and improved a little on their opportunities. They kept the midwinter feast, and sang the praises of the gods; where we now stand the great fire blazed in the central hut, the women baked cakes before it, of meal, spread on flat stones the wild ox was roasting in the ground; ducks were boiling with red-hot stones in an earthen jar; haunches of elk hung before the fire on spits, and fish were baking in the ashes; the antlers of the elk and the wide-spread horns of the ox, eleven feet across, hung over the doorway of the fortunate hunters; the men sang rude songs of hunting and fishing, and carved for the children bows, clubs, and knives of bone. Thus they kept Christmas in the olden time, a Christmas not such as Christians keep, for it recalled Valhella, and not Bethlehem. The descendants of their ancestors, who fireless faced the boreal day, and weaponless attacked the beasts of the ancient times, keep Christmas in far other fashion. Look sharply around you; time is passing; we shall never again behold Picts' houses."

"Let us look at their converse," said the second Wise Man, who was a cynic, and he whispered to the cat. As they passed down the mountain they all put fern-seed in their pockets, for this, you know, would make them invisible.

They made haste through the air to the city of Edinburgh. Coiled up to the east lay a blazing dragon with red and green eyes, breathing smoke, and snorting so as to be heard over all the city. A much more beneficent dragon is this than the one St. George slew; if he drags off our children, he brings them home in due time; he is only a railway dragon after all, lying at the foot of Colton Hill. The lamps, set in rows across the mound, looked like chains of fire swung across a gulf of blackness; and all where the houses were piled against the Castle hill, the inner light seemed to be bursting from the earth at a thousand pores. All the shop windows were like Aladdin's palace; the confectioners' windows were crowded with pyramids of cakes, and jellies, and bonbons, which had taken the place of the fish and game baked in eubers which the Picts formerly ate; and there were no wild beasts abroad, save forlorn pussies on the roofs, and some puppies who had lost their masters and were lurking in corners.

All this is very different from old Pictish times. The houses were more different still; high and square, with carved mullions and arched doorways; beautiful little turrets lifted unexpectedly here and there; abodes which would have seemed Valhalla itself to the Picts.

"But about the people, will they seem like the Norse gods?" sneered the cynical man; "I think not; here is a house where they are having a family party; let us trust to fern-seed, and go in."

They found a lady in the hall coming from the dressing-room, and she went up the stairs to the drawing-room before them. She was a fat lady; the train of her white silk dress fell over five steps; like the Irishman's blanket, it seemed to have been cut off at the top to lengthen it at the bottom, for it rose such a very little way above the waist that it caused poor Bo Peep to blush.

The servant at the drawing-room door bawled "Mrs. Herringshead," and Mrs. Herringshead put her white glove into the primrose glove of her hostess. As it was Christmas, and a "family party," several little trots from the nursery were fitting among the guests. It seemed to have been the object to put as few clothes as possible on these children. Their skirts did not reach to their knees, nor did their stockings rise above their ankles; they had no sleeves but a strip of lace, and their waists were two inches of puffed muslin; they carried dolls of their own size, dressed in gauze and spangles.

"See," said the cynic, "how these pale-faced, soft-voiced, half-naked people, with feathers on their heads and jewels on their necks, who walk on Turkey carpets and sleep on down, have come into the room of those who lived in bee-hive huts. They sing songs of love, not of hunting, and they dance as if motion were a weariness; you may now see what they eat. The servants are carrying about trays of tea and cake, wafers of confections, and little dishes of fruit. What would they think of a boar roasted whole under a bed of glowing peat?"

"Don't be so disagreeable," said Bo Peep. "*Chacun à son gout*, say the Frenchmen; every one to his day, say I. If it had been necessary for these people to eat boars roasted whole, and to live in bee-hive huts to fulfil the object of their existence, they would have been born twelve hundred years ago. But there is another side of to-day which I am going to see, and it lies near this fine place. This is the Christmas of the rich; I will go see the Christmas of the poor."

They left the home of the rich, and Bo Peep leading the way, they soon came where less smoke poured from the chimneys, the light came dimly through patched and broken windows, and no places seemed warm and clean and cheery but the grog-shops.

"I wish," said the third man of Gotham, who was benevolent, "that some of the money wasted in this world might be spent, instead, in making a clean, bright warm resort, with tea and pipes and papers, for these poor folks whose

homes are so desolate, and see if a successful opposition could not be made to the groggeries."

"How stupid you are," said the cynic; "it is much easier to human nature to give a great fortune to build some fine thing in marble, to proclaim one's virtues for centuries after one is dead. Who cares to write their memorials on such perishable things as human hearts."

"Hush," whispered Bo Peep; "come look into this window."

It was the dwelling of an old woman who made her living by selling cockles. She had a handful of coals in the grate, and a tiny black tea-pot on the hob; her table was before the fire, with a paper laid for a cover; she had washed her face and combed her hair, and was toasting two slices of bread and a herring for a Christmas feast. She had, out of a year's savings, bought herself a Christmas present of a coarse warm shawl.

Her supper seemed small enough for one; she looked at it, hesitated, combated an idea, refused, yielded.

She set a chair on the other side of the table, she carefully split the herring and brought another mug; then she went out, and returned with a pale woman with a babe on her arm; a woman poorer even than herself. She set her guest in the warmest place, she gave her the thickest slice of toast, and half the fish and tea, and wrapped her other shawl about her shoulders, saying, "It is Christmas tide."

Then the watchers at the window heard a low voice as from among themselves—"Ye did it unto me."

"It is the voice of the Christ-child," said the man who had been to Germany.

Five, six, seven stories high go these houses, each floor reached by a narrow winding stone staircase, built in a tower outside. Up one of these clattered two boys, and our company made speed to peep in their window, far up in the attic. A sick woman lay moaning on some straw. The boys lit a candle, crying joyously, "Up, mammy, up, and we'll have a good time. P'lice has got daddy, and they say he'll be in a year for it!

I've sold my matches, and here's meat and meal."

"And I've got wood," cried the other, "so get up and be well, mammy, we've got nobody to plague us now!"

And hearing that her drunken tyrant is in safe keeping, is to this poor wretch as life from the dead. Once more she hopes!

"This is too dreadful," says the benevolent man; "let us look in the next window."

Here by the dying coals sits a poor seamstress, her work dropped on the floor, herself asleep through sheer weariness. In the corner, on some straw, sleeps a little girl; plump and pretty, she tosses in her slumber, lying there in her day clothing. Her soft hair is thrown back from her smooth brow; she dreams, she laughs merrily, she speaks clearly. "O! won't I have a bonny big doll when I get big, ha, ha!" and again the laugh rings out.

"Ah," said the watching company under breath, "ah, we were *not* mistaken; we surely saw the waving of wings of light; the Christ-child has been there, making the poor babe happy in her sleep, giving her dreams, because there can nothing else be given her."

"The converse of this would be a king's house," said the cynic.

"Kings of to-day are exactly like other people," rejoined the antiquary; "if we are to see palaces, let them be relics of the past."

"Where are you going?" demanded Bo Peep of the cat.

"I shall settle your dispute by taking you to Craigmillar," replied the cat, driving south-east very rapidly.

In a short time a pile of buildings appeared upon an eminence. The moon, which had been obscured, came out and shone directly down upon it. The massive lines of wall were jagged and broken, but the ivy, 'tis a plant meet for Christmas, spread over them—

Sheltering the poor,
The naked and the cold,
Twining round and o'er
The tottering and old,
Ivy, thou art growing:

And like charity thou art;
From the Christian's generous heart
Warmly ever flowing."

Along the topmost turrets lay hoar frost, and little drifts of snow among the leaves; as they brushed by, a sentry rook gave a hoarse challenge, a majestic owl stepped out of his haunt far up on the tower, and seeing the children of Fantasy, retired again to meditate; brushed by the cat in passing, some bats flew out of the leaves, and wheeled up and down a few times with low cries. The unbidden guests were standing in the ancient hall, once roofed with oak, now open to the sky. Here the retainers of the olden time had held high wassail. The holly boughs had wreathed the rafters, the mistletoe had hung in every doorway, and under it the squires kissed the maids. Here they had kept the Christmas feast, the boar's head baked with lemon in the mouth, the huge bowl of punch with baked apples bobbing about on top, and flagons of ale to be warmed in pipkins in the broad fireplace. What shouts of rude merriment rose here; what a jargon of wild songs, how armour rattled, and spurs rung, and steel clashed on steel!

They went up the winding stone stair to the reception room; here the French regent, Mary of Guise, once played at cards with her friend Cardinal Beaton, and told him how she had hoodwinked the English ambassador. Here, too, the Christmas feast was served, and lords and barons partook of it, while singers from foreign lands discoursed sweet music in the gallery. On this side the castle is the confessional, where the queen's ladies confessed themselves in preparation for the sacrament; on that side the castle is the chapel, all roofless and forsaken now, where service was said on Christmas night, and a waxen babe, clad in lace, lay in a manger of silver gilt.

Here also Mary of Scots kept her court; here she came as Queen Dowager of France, and amused herself with fantastic sports, planted trees, fed fish, and coquetted with her train of admirers. Here Rizzio sung to her, and Darnley courted her.

Here she strove to beguile a firm and

honest spirit, John Knox. Here the princely Murray, and the subtle Lethrington, and the gallant Kircaldy, went and came. Here, alas! murders more than one were plotted; here, where Mar had been done to death, Mary long, long after came as a prisoner; here the bright pageant of royalty faded forever out of her life. Later, Cromwell thundered at these gates, and ruin invaded the home of kings.

"It is better to be royal in these days, than then," said Bo Peep. "Now, if royalty will keep quiet, like linen laid up in lavender, then royalty may have a comfortable time of it. In those days, as I know by experience, it was much better to be a shepherdess than a queen; for the head of a shepherdess was safe to stay on her shoulders, while a queen's was likely to be divided from them, and pray, what would life be without a head?"

"It is always better to be a shepherdess than a queen," said the philosopher; "human nature is not apt to conduct itself well under heavy responsibilities; its reputation becomes bad, or merely negative."

They were on their way again, and Bo Peep said: "I think I see another ruin. And these are Salisbury Craigs."

"Yes," said the antiquary, "I directed the cat to go to Saint Anthony's chapel. Let us, while looking at homes, see the homes of the early monks."

"Homes!" cried Bo Peep, "why, Saint Anthony's chapel has only one wall!"

"It has ghosts. Let me tell you a secret; at Christmas tide, the ghosts of the old inhabitants return at twelve o'clock."

They were set down on an eminence, and the view was good in the full moonlight.

"How cunning these monks were in choosing an abode!" cried the Men of Gotham. "See this chapel! on the north side it stands on a cliff so abrupt that no goat could climb it; it looks down upon a Loch; it has a noble view; the Firth of Forth, the verdant fields of Fife, the bold outline of the Colton Hill, the frowning defiance of the Castle Rock.

On these other sides the ascent is steep and the view commanding; there is water at hand, in this swelling spring, about which the early songsters made the ballad—

'O waly, waly, up yon bank
And waly, waly, down yon brae,'

We will suppose that among these old celibates were the truly devout men of the time; were the scholarly men such as now in schools, and colleges, and editorial chairs, and in pulpits, make their scholarship available to the world. Imagine, if you can, a better retreat for the pious recluse or the scholar than this. On these hills they could find innumerable retreats to be alone with God; the voice of prayer may have been full often heard among these crags and in the recesses of the hunter's bog. With parchments, or thick black letter tomes in hand, the thoughtful monks could wander at their will undisturbed among the knolls, or up the steep sides of Arthur's Seat."

Even as these words were uttered, enchantment seemed to be at work in St. Anthony's chapel. The one ruined wall expanded, and became four walls, forming the chapel, and a tower rose overhead, with a ghostly bell, swinging solemnly in the midnight air, calling the long dead monks back to their earthly haunts. The tall, narrow windows were filled with painted glass; the floor was laid in well-burned tiles from Holland, and all the wood-work was curiously carved oak from England. Oil burned in silver lamps, given by Saint Margaret, Scotland's Saxon Queen; the altar veil was wrought by ladies of honor in Holy-wood; there were exquisite missals and breviaries, and volumes of old meditations, written on vellum, bound in velvet, fretted with gold, and clasped with silver; books so choice, so exquisite, that the antiquary from Gotham groaned when he reflected that they were intangible things, with all their magnificent illuminations, ghosts of books long perished.

Came the sound of voices singing, thin, wavering voices, not from living

men, voices of the ghost monks returning to their ghost chapel.

Bo Peep watched them winding up the hill from Saint Margaret's Well. Their heads were bare, rope girdles bound their flowing robes of serge, sandals were on their feet, each one carried a crucifix, and on they came, up, up the hill, and entered the chapel door, and stood about the altar singing still. Some were fat-looking and jolly, and these slipped away from the rest, and stole down into the vaults, and began drinking wine and ale, and eating cakes; the others sang on at the altar, plaintive, haggard, and unsatisfied.

"Explain this," said Bo Peep.

"Alas! Bo Peep," said the philanthropist, "we are all people of Fantasy, and we cannot understand it exactly. Do you see the expression of these men, who have been thinking men, who cannot be satisfied with cakes and ale? They have failed to find satisfaction, because they have only sought it in earthly springs, or have mixed the celestial supply with things of earth. Satisfaction, Bo Peep, comes to human souls only through the World's Great Gift, the Christ-child; but not alone as a child, as these men would keep him, but as a Man, a God, a Redeemer, a Mediator, a King. I say again, we cannot understand it, but the whole fact is this, these have lost satisfaction out of their lives, because they did not humbly take it as it was offered from on High."

The chapel, the monks, the music faded; the Wanderers of Fantasy turned away burdened by touching, though so feebly, themes too high for their apprehension.

"Let us go somewhere to cheer us up," said the cynic; "human affairs and ghosts have been wearisome to us."

Westward, westward they wheeled. Presently they passed the town of Paisley, its hundred manufactories all quiet now, and then on into the peaceful country, spreading out in farms, with dark lines of hedgerows between the fields.

Here was a low line of buildings in a square about a court. Part of the

buildings were with heavy thatched roofs, the fourth side showed a red tiled roof, and windows with diamond panes—a Scotch farm-house of the olden type, a type fast passing away. Bo Peep looked into a window with a netted curtain trimmed with home-knit lace. "Dear me! how stiff and dreary!" she cried.

There was a square of carpet in the middle of the floor, a red covered table with some books primly piled; wooden chairs stiffly set in rows, and a mantel shelf with one china vase, two pewter jugs, and a bunch of peacocks' feathers. "I like my attic better," said Bo Peep. "See, there is no fire in the grate; it is piled with strips of tinsel and curled tissue paper, and decorated with pink paper roses."

"O, but they do not live here," cried a Gothamite, looking over her shoulder; "this is the parlor, where they come once a week to do cleaning; where they have their funerals, and where they sit in uncomfortable state after a wedding. The kitchen is the place where these people make a home feeling; come and look in there."

"O, dear me!" screamed Bo Peep, when she had looked in the kitchen window; "did ever any one see such a shiny place!"

The fire still blazed in the well-cleaned grate, and its bright reflection set the country kitchen in full display. The floor was laid in tiles of a bluish slate, and each separate slate had a pattern of geometric figures, or of curled lines, drawn upon it in chalk, the last work of the careful housewife before she went to bed.

There was much woodwork in the kitchen; indeed, there was no plaster, and the walls were ceiled, and there were great smooth beams overhead. As there was no plaster, so was there neither paint nor whitewash. All the walls, the doors, the window-sashes, even the ceiling overhead, had been so scrubbed and rubbed and polished, that they shone like satin. The windows were so clean that Bo Peep hardly thought she was looking through glass; on the walls hung harness,

hames of steel and a brass warming-pan, so brightly scoured that they quite twinkled the fire out of countenance; on a shelf near the ceiling stood a row of tall brass candlesticks; by a window hung a carved wooden box full of great horn porridge spoons; upon a dresser stood a row of pewter bowls, all rubbed to silver brightness; behind the bowls, and along every shelf of the dresser, stood the family earthenware, of blue and white, in that impossible Chinese pattern which we all remember; where the boat sails through mid-air and the bridge crosses from nothing to nowhere, and the house without perspective is foundationless, and lifts its roof above the clouds. Bo Peep liked this pattern; indeed, she had all her dishes of it.

What had during the day seemed part of the kitchen wall, was now set open, and revealed *press beds*, each bed being a kind of square closet, concealed during the day time. While Bo Peep was looking, a door opened; all the family had then not gone to bed; the old grandmother came from the dairy. The square nails all through the soles of her shoes clacked on the floor; she wore a purple petticoat and a quilted calico sack of a yellow hue; her cap had wide white ruffles, flapping about her mild old face. She put on her iron-bound spectacles, took her father's ancient Bible, and read it by the fire-light; then she went to the chairs where her grandchildren had piled their clothes before going to bed, and on each she laid a pair of red mittens, her only Christmas gift.

This was Christmas tide in a farmhouse. Even the cynic was pacified by this quiet homescene. "I think," said the philanthropic man, "that the world grows better; there were no such quiet, plentiful, religious, cleanly homes as this among the humble folk in feudal days, nor yet among the lords themselves. If you will come a little farther over the brae, we shall find a relic of feudal homes, so old that its date is forgotten."

They passed over the steep brae side. A beautiful loch lay before them, glittering in the moonlight like a sheet of molten silver. It was crossed in the cen-

tre by a solid embankment, so that the one looked like inland seas, that were twins. Beyond the southernmost of these sheets of water a massive keep rose squarely against the sky. Along its jagged and broken summit long streamers of dead grass waved on the frosty night air; where once a great tower had been, the walls had crumbled away until they came to the top of an arch, the vaulted roof of a chapel, and here among the *debris* a thorn seed had germinated, and become a ragged tree, its branches creaking in the rising wind. Behind this frowning ruin rose a noble hill, crowned with a dark crest of pine. As the wanderers stood watching, a cry was heard, and a moving of great wings, and slowly from the east sailed up some huge white thing, and sat above the topmost turret of Stanley.

"Behold," said the philosopher, "the last representative of a haughty race of barons; yon great owl, who has been after his prey, and now returns to devour it where his home is made."

"Do you see," said the antiquary from Gotham, "that tall stone, set in a square base? It is called the Danish stone, and the legend is that once the Vikings came up to plunder Stanley Castle. See then the keeping of Christmas in high feudal fashion. The Vikings, terrible in war, come sweeping over yonder brae. The warder on the summit of Stanley sounds a warning cry; you perceive that the castle has but one door, and that is commanded by the tower, and all the windows are high up above the ground; this indicates the insecure and tumultuous times in which it was built.

"Flying before the Danish Vikings, and down yonder hills, terrified by the rumor of their approach, rush the country people, the humble retainers, with wives and children, and their little wealth.

"No artillery is used in those days; Stanley receives the foe with showers of arrows and javelins from the turrets; and stones, and boiling water, and pitch are cast upon those who come near the door. The women and children hear the uproar of strife, and by turns grow pale with fear and flushed with triumph; the

bold baron arms his retainers from his armory; he hears the war-cry of his friends sweeping from the pines on yon hill; he rushes from his keep, and sword smites on sword, strong men fall, captives are made; there is a wild cry; the Danish leader bites the dust, and his body is in the hands of his foes!

"Now there is a call for parley; the Vikings will retire if they may have the corpse of the chief. But Stanley's baron is hot with war; he will reserve his enemy's body for indignities, and will destroy the last remnant of the Vikings, hauging an avenging fury on the rear of their retreat.

"But stay; a voice comes to him from his dame in the castle. 'These Vikings serve the gods of Valhalla; you are a Christian baron, and this is Christmas time, the time of good will; lay by wrath and make peace.' It is a word in an acceptable time! Arms are laid by. 'I will not give this body back for your heathen rites,' says the Baron, 'but we will together afford him honorable burial at my castle door.' They make the grave, and lay the Viking therein, armed and wrapped in a goodly robe; they set up over him this 'Danish Stone;' to the men of Stanley it has partially the form of a cross, and reminds them of their faith; to the Vikings it speaks of Alfadir, greater than Valhalla.

"And now the feast is spread; the Vikings and the retainers of Stanley eat and drink together; the boar and the ox are roasted whole, and shouts and songs ascend. Stanley remembers Yule-tide and the Danes Joel. It is thus, my friends of Fantasy, that they kept a Christmas in the feudal days."

"We thank you," said Bo Peep and the other two Gothamites; "this is a rare tale of a far off-time."

"If we are to see more homes," added Bo Peep, "we must hasten: night wears away; with the first cock crowing, we shall return to the common life of men."

Again they pursued their course; valleys and streams, towers, hamlets, farmsteads slid by beneath them. They heard the ripple of water, the Molindinar Burn was seeking the Clyde: a hill rose ab-

ruptly before them, covered with marbles, in towers, domes, shafts, pillars, plain slabs, and square tombs. "Behold," said the philosopher, "Necropolis, the home of the dead."

But below the hill, and beyond the ringing burn, was a grand pile, a beautiful poetic thought of the ancient days frozen into stone; with spire and transept, arched windows and doors, with frieze, and gargoyle, and scroll, and branch work; it was as a strain of music stayed, and crystallized into a something tangible, to teach the eye what music's shape might be forever.

"Lo," said the antiquary, "the inheritance of Saint Mungo! Here he came bearing the word of peace to a heathen race. It was on a Christmas day that a miracle was sent as a sign here in behalf of the missionary. Mungo had preached to the pagan king of the Picts of the vanity of gods and the power of his supreme Ruler. The king was in the midst of plenty, and the missionary and his little band were starving. The king refused them food, and pointing to his overflowing granaries said, 'If your God were so strong as you say, he would not send food to me, his foe, and refuse it to you, his friend. If he be a great God as you say, let him of his might transfer my corn to you.' Mungo came back here, where he had a little chapel, and began to pray. The time was late December. The winds rose up in fury and drove the black clouds along the sky,—a deluge of waterfall. Burns and rivers swelled beyond their banks; the narrow Molendinar became a torrent; it surged around the granaries of the king; it lifted the solid floors, and floated them, unbroken, with their burden of food, to the prophet's cell. Then the retiring streams left them there, and Mungo and his disciples kept their Christmas time with bread and to spare, and called the hungry to their door and gave them food. Thus the early teachers kept Christmas in the days of the Picts."

They entered the lofty nave; the clustered columns rose lightly to the wreathed arches of the roof; the galleries, carved in stone, seemed like scarfs of lace hung from pillar to pillar; the moonlight,

smiting full upon one side of the building, lit up the great painted windows; the silence was oppressive; they trembled at the echo of their own feet on the stone floor. They wandered through choir and transept, and Chapter House and Lady Chapel; they were awed because the uses of this house, the thought which originated it, the ideas expressed in it, were beyond the grasp of children of Fantasy. Here had been worship, humble and sincere; here had been pomp and haughty pageantry; here prelate had striven with prelate for the supremacy, croziers had been used as cudgels, alb and cape, and stole and charuble, had been torn in the strife, and the flying fragments had filled the air, while cries of discord shook the roof. Here silence and desolation had reigned, and here now each Sabbath echoed the Word and the Hymn.

They went down into the Crypts; here, as on the hillside, were the homes of the dead. Under the pavement lay long buried dust; here were stone coffins of bishops and abbots whose names are lost, and whose very ashes have disappeared. And here lies Mungo. "Like a warrior taking his rest" sleeps the soldier of the cross; with folded hands, and limbs peacefully disposed lies the effigy of the Saint under the canopy of stone; it cannot disturb him that his work has been maligned, his faith denied, that he has been claimed by his enemies and rejected by his friends upon the strength of that claim. He sleeps content; over his dust flourishes the faith in which he lived and for which he wrought. There was something very impressive in this memorial of a life so busy, so unselfish, so far-reaching; moveless the hand of stone, dust the hand of flesh; but the strong grasp of the spirit held through twelve centuries, and was vigorous still.

"What a wonderful and potent thing the truth is!" said Bo Peep.

"And how wonderful are these human souls, that can apprehend it, be filled with it, teach it, and live forever through it," cried the Philosopher, with an envious sigh.

"Yes," said the cynic, "and with so

much within their reach, with capacity for so great things, how strange that they should so many of them spend their lives, and be contented with trifles, and bubbles, and absurd gewgaws which would be even too little for the satisfaction of us children of Fantasy."

"We must be getting homeward," cried the eldest of the party; "there will soon be a thin mist rising from the earth, the stars will tremble far back into the blue, and a flush of saffron will creep into the eastern sky."

Once more into the sparkling calm of the winter midnight. Their faces were toward the East.

"Has morning stolen upon us unaware?" said Bo Peep, for she saw a brightness in the zenith; but no, it was the trail of starry garments and the lessening of white wings up the skies; the questioner gave answer to herself. "It is one more passed to the home of the Dead."

Then said the eldest companion, "It is one more lifted into the true Home of the Living."

But the old time Shepherdess was drawn by a new longing; she left her company. Whither was she straying? She rose far above them. They called her to return.

"Come back, come back, poor child of Fancy: such as we are cannot breathe in that subtle upper air." And so it was; she drooped slowly downward, as one disappointed and sore distressed. Her mentor sought to comfort her. "This is the fate that is on us, my friend. We children of Fancy cannot be raised to immortality, nor can we die while time lasts; we, immaterial as we are, yet pass away with material things; the inheritance of many generations, we have ourselves no inheritance after the years of earth. The homes of this world we have entered freely; that Home of the Living has a height to which we can never attain. How blessed are these sons of men whose immortal longings are the earnest of immortality. How strange, that yearly, as this season comes reminding them of the Great Gift, of that Gift that is their talisman and

key to open the gate of the Home of the Living, so little of thankfulness, so little of glory to God, so little of peace on earth, so little of good will to men, dwells in the midst of them. Christmas, dear companions, is a time for some men to rail at as a superstition; it is a time to others of selfish indulgence; to still others, alas they are too few! it is a time to echo in deeds the song of the first Christmas, that came as the reign of the gods of fable passed away."

Their pilgrimage through the Homes of Christmas was ended: slowly they faded back from whence they came; all the world slept quietly awaiting the Christmas dawn."

Thus ended the story that the Owl brought me. He ceased speaking, drooped his long wings lower, and ruffled the feathers upon his neck.

"Pray, is that the end of everything?" I asked.

"Not at all," he replied solemnly; "the end of everything is in the application. Here is the message that I send by you to the happy race to whom the Home of the Living is attainable. Be better for each Christmas tide. So live that Christmas days, returning, shall lift you ever nearer that Home of Light. Have not I heard of your cities,—that sickness, and famine, and vice taint the troubled air, that hearts are lonely and homes are desolate, because there is so little of brotherhood among that race which has all the pleasures of earth in its present keeping, and before it a future that, never shall end?"

"I never knew," I said, "that birds of your feather took so great an interest in the fortunes of our race—a race which so often persecutes you."

"It is the sign of true greatness to forgive injuries," he made answer, and whether the Owl went out of the door, or through the window, who can tell, for the excellent chancellor was gone, and I was left alone with such few materials for a Christmas story as he had been pleased to furnish me. Perhaps he had meant us to learn by his story to contrast the past with the present and be thankful; to contrast the two sides of the present,

the abundance and the lack, and be liberal; to contrast the acts and thoughts which only take hold of earth with the end of all here, and the reward of all hereafter, and be earnest for the highest good; or, he may have meant fifty other things which all wise people can find out for themselves. I merely tell the tale as it was told to me.

But so solemn had been the Owl's warning, and so grave the closing of his story, that my heart felt burdened in the joyous Christmas time; when the seer of birds had gone out, came the poet in, and standing on the threshold thus he sang:

"It chanced upon the merry, merry Christmas
 Eve,
 I went sighing past the church, across the
 moorland dreary—
 'O, never sin, and want, and woe this earth
 will leave,
 And the bells but mock the wailing round,
 they sing so cheery.

"How long, O Lord! how long before thou
 come again?
 Still in cellar and in garret and on the
 moorland dreary
 The orphans moan, and widows weep, and
 poor men toil in vain,
 Till earth is sick of hope deferred, though
 Christmas bells be cheery.'

"Then arose a joyous clamor from the wild
 fowl on the mere,
 Beneath the stars, across the snow, like clear
 bells ringing,
 And a voice within cried—' Listen! Christ-
 mas carols even here,
 Though thou be dumb, yet o'er their work
 the stars and snows are singing.'

"Blind! I live, I love, I reign; and all the
 nations through
 With the thunder of my judgments even now
 are ringing;
 Do thou fulfil *thy* work, even as yon wild
 fowl do,
 Thou wilt heed no less the wailing, yet hear
 through it angels singing."

VIEWS ON THE DANUBE.

BY VIATOR.

AS the best landscapes are those which have water in the outlook, the name landscape seems incomplete in itself without the other element. We generally go to river banks for the most beautiful scenery.

For a ramble, or for a picture, the river Danube surpasses all others, the Rhine excepted. There have not been wanting those who have given the Rhine the second place. A traveller will generally prefer the Rhine to the Danube above Vienna; for who can find in the latter river anything that equals the scenery of the seven mountains, or such a village as St. Goar, or such a castle as the Drachenfels? The Rhine excels the Danube in particular scenes; it cannot equal it in its long succession of good sights, in the number of its wood-crowned summits, romantic cliffs, chasms and valleys, and startling whirlpools. The

Danube excels the Rhine in variety and in the accessories to a landscape, such as living objects, there being so many nations dwelling alongside its broad and rushing stream. But the tourist who has seen the Rhine must enter with no half-souled ardor into the panegyric of Byron:

"Adieu to thee, fair Rhine! A vain adieu!
 There can be no farewell to scenes like thine;
 The mind is colored by thy every hue;
 And if reluctantly the eyes resign
 Their cherished gaze upon thee, lovely Rhine!
 'Tis with the thankful glance of parting
 praise;
 More mighty spots may rise, more glaring
 shine,
 But none unite in one attaching maze
 The brilliant, fair, and soft,—the glories of
 old days."

The Danube rises near the sources of the Rhine, and with it furnishes another example for the hackneyed illustration of