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A SPIRIT IN PRISON; OR, THE PASTOR'S SON.

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CHAPTER V.

SICK EVEN UNTO DEATH.

A LEARNED and devout doctor in Turin, anxious for the extermination of heresy, had been desirous that that holy arsenal, the convent, should be furnished with intellectual as well as temporal and spiritual weapons, and dying, had left his library to the brotherhood of Villar, in consideration of their prayers for his soul.

The prayers were possibly said, but the cases in which the books had travelled from Turin had remained untouched for years in a musty and dusty room. The available library of the house was a small one, and Father Paul obtained leave from the Superior to arrange the doctor's gift upon the empty shelves.

The Superior had some literary tastes himself, but he greatly preferred Petrarch, Ariosto, and more questionable Italian authors, to the ancients; so, for the most part, Father Paul had the library to himself. He also obtained permission for Laurent to help him, and, in an unusual fit of authority and good nature, the Superior gave orders that the barbet should not be called away from his work with

Father Paul to scour the kettles or fetch water for the kitchen. In truth the reverend Father Bernard, so long as he had his novel, his play-book, his glass of wine, and a soft cushion, was not a bad King Log, and was much to be preferred to King Stork in the person of Father Jerome, still absent on his mission.

Many were the groans and sighs with which Father Paul contemplated the ravages which rats, mice, moth, and must had committed upon the precious books. He mourned over the damp and crumpled pages of Tacitus, almost shed tears at a stain upon Plato, and positively tore such hair as the tonsure had left him, when a mouse's nest was discovered in a noble, black letter Livy. The injuries of the saints and the fathers were also a great trial to his soul, but Laurent could not help seeing that he endured the damp condition of Nicholas de Lyra's seven huge tomes, and even blue mould upon the Antwerp edition of St. Francis, with much more resignation than a torn leaf of some heathen author.

"You are very fond of the classics, are you not, dear father?" said Laurent as he helped him to repair as far as possible the unfortunate Livy.



SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY PARISH.

BY MRS. JULIA M'NAIR WRIGHT.

"DICK," said Peter, "why don't you settle at something? You really ought to get to work."

"The trouble with me is," answered Dick, "that I cannot work without a fixed object. I must have some great end in view. Then I can work like a—like a Trojan."

"And when did your experiences prove that?" asked Peter.

"I am not speaking of what has been, but of what would be in certain circumstances," replied Richard, with a sudden increase of dignity.

"The fact is," said Peter, whose hours of study were seriously disturbed by his idle and erratic cousin, "I think we should both do better if you would fix upon some study, and pursue it at certain hours. Why not apply yourself to a profession?"

"My dear fellow," returned Dick, "only one of the three great professions would suit a man of my stamp, and I have serious objections to all of them. For example, your experience has given me a distaste for the ministry. If I studied divinity, it would be when the market was not overstocked with divines. I don't say, Peter, that there are more ministers than the world needs; but there are more than that portion of the world needs where everybody wants to stay. Look you, my cousin. Your church has one hundred more ministers than last year, but she has fewer pastors. It may be a sign of ecclesiastical prosperity to have the theological seminaries full, but I do not look upon it in that light. The church is ready enough to instruct all the men in theology that will consent to be instructed; but having crammed their minds full, she suddenly cuts them loose to get on as they can, and makes no further provision for them. She acts," cried Dick with energy, rushing to the window, and gesticulating

earnestly, "just like that hen out there. She made no end of fuss over those chicks last week, clucking and feeding, and deporting herself as a model parent. Now she is leaving them to shift for themselves, and whips them off if they come near her. The student gets through his course; and lo! except in chance cases, there is no provision made for him. If he goes on a foreign mission, very likely he is set by himself, the only civilized being among some thousands of heathen, whose temporal and eternal salvation depend on him. Not one man in thirty believes himself able to endure that, so they do not offer themselves."

"Well," said Peter, faintly, "we leave the providing of fields of labor to the Lord. We believe he superintends it, you know."

"And I believe that the Lord expects people to look after his work with the same energy and common sense that they display in their own affairs. There is plenty of money in the Church, taken as a whole, Peter; but there are also hundreds of little churches going without pastors, or starving their ministers along on three or five hundred a year. In this precious congregation of yours, my friend, is a million of property, and they are giving you eight hundred dollars salary, and they call it *charity*, and expect the Lord to feel under obligations to them for their liberality!"

"See now, Dick, you are not to continue this tirade. No one suggests your being a minister; you are evidently in a wrong frame of mind for *that*; but what have you against the noble study of medicine?" said Peter.

"Sure enough! there are eight doctors here, and among them I doubtless could learn all the legal methods of curing people. Still, I do think if it were not for lacking a license, I could do pretty well in that line already. Here, my cousin,

comes Mr. Litkip in his best suit, and at a solemn pace; it is evident that his father is dead; there will then be a funeral party, and a funeral sermon which you must preach, my Peter, and wherein you will be expected to do justice to the pious memory of Litkip, senior, who has quarrelled with God and man for the last forty years!"

"Dick!" cried the despairing Peter, "you do have a most discouraging way of putting things."

"Remember, you promised at the very next funeral, Peter, to make a bold stand against the funeral festivities."

"I know I did," said Peter, "and here is an occasion, and the hardest that could be presented;" as he spoke he answered the knock of the bereaved Litkip, junior.

"Father's gone," said Mr. Litkip, a middle-aged man.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Peter, and he said so truly; for judging the defunct Litkip as permitted by his fruits, he had no idea that there was anything better than this present world in store for him.

"The burying will be to-morrow," said the mourner; "it is harvest," he added, with an anxious thought of fields where, but for that other reaper, Death, the Litkip family would have now been reaping.

"It looks like rain," said the consolatory Richard.

"O, I hope it won't rain!" cried Mr. Litkip. "Now, Döminy, we want you to have a sermon ready—a good long one, for father was an old man. We'll have services in the church, and I've invited all the other ministers near here, and asked them each to make a few remarks. I suppose if we did get home early we couldn't do much; so we might as well spend the time in getting the funeral done up decently. The womanfolks won't have it before eleven, on account of the dinner; they can't get it ready before that. You be over by half-past ten, Döminy."

"Really," said Dick, when the chief mourner had gone, "if our friend Litkip could be preached or feasted into heaven, he'd get there beyond a doubt."

"I cannot endure these customs," said Peter; "there is to be a meeting of session to-day, and I'll try and have a resolution passed condemning this present practice."

When Peter's parish buried the dead, it also feasted the living. This custom may have been intended to comfort humanity through the agency of the palate, or to console physicians bereaved of a patient with the certainty of other patients speedily to come.

When death entered a dwelling, Mrs. Graves and the best cooks of the neighborhood followed in his train. Mrs. Graves came armed with authority, her needle case, and a roll of flannel, or bishop's lawn, wherewith to prepare humanity's last garment.

While Mrs. Graves, with face duly solemnized and oracular lips, presided in the bed-room, cutting and making, the voluntary cooks took possession of the kitchen, and began the preparations for the "funeral-baked meats," and not meats only, in the modern sense, but funeral pies, cakes, biscuits, pickles, and cheese, with prodigality truly inspiring. Thus it was not unusual to hear eulogiums of the departed mingled with commendations of the bounteous feast that graced his burial. The widow's meditations and the orphan's tears were interrupted by inquiries as to how many varieties of cake, and what different meats should be set forth as the exponents of their affliction. Mrs. Graves, snipping at a shroud, was called away to reveal how many pies had been baked by some other inconsolable survivors.

The days when the body lay waiting for the tomb were consumed in cookery; when the funeral services were in progress, some faithful friends absented themselves in order to set tastefully the tables; and when the last sad scene was ended, dust had been returned to dust, and the grave had been properly bewept, the procession came again to turn the home of mourning into the home of feasting; they mingled anecdotes of the dead with surmises as to the makers of the loaves and dainties set before them, and checked their tears that they might drink their tea.

To Peter, who had ever associated death with bowed window-shutters, black crape, entire stillness, a few ministering friends moving about softly, and a company of mourners going soberly from the cemetery to their own homes; to whom burial, and certain simple, austere rites seemed inseparable, this bustle and gormandizing were intolerable.

This reckless and impulsive modern apostle set himself to that impossible task of destroying an ancient custom; as if he, armed with the modicum of apostolic power left to the successor of Zebedee's son, could root out a fashion that had been firmly planted years before he himself was born.

Our friend had resolved to express himself on this point to his session, and get them to unite with him in an address recommending to the parish a new order of funeral rites. Accordingly, as this burial among the Litkips afforded opportunity, the young minister earnestly set forth his views to his assembled officers that very afternoon.

The dignitaries sat silent as their ancestors who took part in the primitive councils of Manhattan, as related by that king of historiographers, Diedrich Knickerbocker.

At length the senior of all the Provincians opened his lips. He was a small old man, with twinkling blue eyes, and a ruddy cherubic countenance, fringed with snow white hair; his words were as whimsically honest as his face.

"You're right, Dōminy; that's just what I think. Our customs *are* ridiculous, but what are you going to do about it? Small use in knowing better, if you can't do better. *I'd* like to be buried without this nonsense, but I can't, and neither can Daniel Litkip."

"That's so," quoth aged Uncle Josiah Church, stretching a long, bony, trembling hand across the table, to pluck at his neighbor's arm. "You can't, and I can't. T'won't be long now; you and I are getting up to the nineties, and older than him that's gone; we've got to put up with these things. They'll give out invitations for our burying soon, and then our friends will come, and they'll

eat our pigs, and our chickens, and whatever else we've got, spite of all we can do; they wouldn't stop if we groaned in our coffins; I think of it every time I feed the critters."

"Aye, aye," said the senior, "they'll kill the fatted calf over us. Scripture is, you know—'It is meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother *is* dead,'"¹ and the dapper little octogenarian chuckled at his heavy compeer.

Silence thus broken, all began to speak, and Peter found himself opposed by even his best friends, for these good people were conservative, and clung to ancestral customs as they did to ancestral acres. The dignitaries, in fact, were resolved not to lose certain good dinners, and Peter was forced to yield, having no one on his side but the two jocular grandfathers, who had an eye to the safety of their pigs and chickens.

"The funeral sermons harass me almost as greatly as the funeral dinners," said Peter. "A man who will have nothing to do during his life with ministers, must have half a dozen to preach over his coffin. Now, if we should say out our honest convictions, that there was no hope in his death, and that there can be no use for his memory, except as a warning, the community would raise a cry of indignation. All that I can do is to keep clear altogether of the case in hand, and preach an ordinary sermon to the living. But as I do that, I feel it will be useless, as between the grief or gratulation of the surviving friends, the curiosity of lookers-on, and the general expectation of a feast to come, the sermon is likely to be nearly unheard. It was only last week," continued the apostle, with an aggrieved air, "that I was called eight miles away to preach a funeral sermon for a babe of a week old, in a family where no one ever attends church, and where they would resent a pastoral visit. I found two other ministers there to assist in the services."

"Well," said old Mr. Church, "I hope you preached the gospel fully, if they are people who so seldom hear it."

"I tried to, but it seemed an unpromising effort."

"We know not which shall prosper, this or that," said Mr. Province, "and I hope you'll make an especial endeavor to reach these Litkips."

"As far as old Daniel is concerned, I could have done him more good if he would have come to church a fortnight ago," replied the pastor, moodily.

When a young man has two sermons to write in a week, and these two are all he can do, it is a serious matter to have a third thrust upon him, to be ready at twenty-four hours notice. Besides, the bereaved Litkip had remarked at parting, "We want you to have a written sermon, Dominy, so everybody will be sure you made it just for father!"

The Litkip funeral was conducted on old-fashioned principles. When the guests were met together, the undertaker went among them, and solemnly presented all those gentlemen who had waited on the deceased in his illness, who had assisted in getting ready for the ceremony, or were to be pall-bearers, with a pair of black kid gloves. The ministers were escorted into a private room, and decorated with large white scarfs, passed over the right shoulder, and under the left arm; each sash was made of three yards of fine white linen, and ornamented with two black rosettes about the size of tea-saucers. The same magnificent undertaker distributed among the assisting ladies, who had sewed, watched, or baked in behalf of the dead man, cambric handkerchiefs. Dick was complimented with a pair of gloves, because he was supposed to be a sort of chorollary of the pastor. He put on his gloves meekly, but did not understand them.

When the funeral was over, Peter, who wished ever to uphold his principles, declined to share the festive meal, and prepared to return home. Dick also had principles; but to-day, after ceremonies four hours long, he had an appetite for dinner, an appetite stronger than any other known consideration, so he meant to stay and be feasted. Ignorant of the customs proper on this occasion, the two cousins retired to the spare

room, and each divested himself of the paraphernalia bestowed by the undertaker, and laid them upon the bed.

Peter then went home.

It was three hours before the dinner was over and the guests were gone. Richard being in high good humor after so many good things—not the sermons, but the eatables—was among the last to leave. As he got his hat, he heard a discussion in the parlor.

"Well! the Dominy and his cousin have left their things. I wonder if the scarf and gloves were not good enough for them?"

"They're dreadful high strung," said somebody.

"I take it as an insult to the dead," said a sepulchral voice.

Then came the piercing tones of Mrs. Graves. "It's ten to one that they didn't know they ought to keep them. Very likely. O! there's Mr. Richard himself! Say, sir, why did you not keep your scarf and gloves?"

"Madam," said Richard, addressing the mistress of the mansion, with his hand on his heart, "I would as soon have thought of carrying off your best bed-quilt! We had no idea these things were to be kept."

Dick's speech, coming after the exhilarating funeral feast, caused even the most lugubrious survivors to laugh. The sepulchral voice made answer:

"The scarf—and the gloves—are mementos—mementos—of the dead."

"As such they will be accepted, accepted, though we can never hope to reciprocate," said wicked Dick.

"I don't think," remarked Dick to Peter, "that three hours of fasting pay for four hours of funeral sermons. I also do not think that three yards of linen and one pair of gloves—of which the right is split already—pay you, Peter, for your writing all night. There are many things, my cousin, that do not pay even a student of human nature such as I am."

"Daniel Litkip's history," said Peter, "is all concluded, except the vendue."

"And at the vendue I shall present myself," said Dick.



Now a vendue is a peculiar and favorite institution of Peter's parish. It is the beginning and end of every family history. To vendues go young people to set themselves up in housekeeping; at the vendues the disbanding households sell themselves out. The soil of this place is only favorable to indigenous families; foreign stock, planted in that happy locality, runs out in two or three years. The fertility of the Rocktop farms, the wealth of their possessors, and the legends that many of the people make from two to five thousand dollars yearly from their quince trees, induce many strangers to establish themselves in that favored vicinity.

Broken-down merchants, impoverished hotel keepers, civilians with rural tastes, and young men intent on a fortune, rush hither, and invest in acres of wheat and quinces. But while the indigenous families are thriving, the exotics blast and wither; the quinces will not produce except for an ancient tiller of the soil; and when the two or three years of effort have resulted in failure, the stranger's misery culminates in a vendue, at which the neighbors generously gather, alert for good bargains.

Every spring Rocktop is girdled with a line of vendues; the auctioneer's voice can be heard from the vendue in progress to the scene of the vendues to come, and as nothing can be done in this neighborhood without a big dinner, every vendue has its feast, and the auctioneer during these halcyon days grows fat, and makes his fortune.

But vendues are not solely the results of the emigration and immigration of strangers. When death breaks up a family, there is a vendue over the relics. Here is afforded an opportunity for sisters to quarrel over their bids for the family pictures; for the shaving apparatus of the six months' deceased head of the house to be put up for sale, with a delicate reference to the well-kept chin of the defunct neighbor; and here the village buffoon may raise a laugh when the old grandmother's empty chair is sold for fifty cents.

Vendues are advertised for weeks beforehand; the friendly neighbors then

make calls on the doomed household, get up mental inventories of their effects, and determine within themselves what they will bid off, and at what price. Here is a fine chance to become suspicious of your acquaintances' visits; to detect ulterior designs when your friend admires your carpet, or when your especial confident blandly inquires what you gave for your curtains.

Our dear Dick, holding himself a student of human nature—though unfortunately he took most interest in its crookedest side—seized upon vendues as affording him unusual opportunities for pursuing his favorite studies.

Circumstances had conspired to hasten the Litkip vendue, and friend Dick was early on the ground. The first person our student met was Mr. Litkip.

"Here we are!" cried Dick.

"Here we *are*," replied Litkip, emphasizing differently. "I ought to be putting in wheat, but vendues must occur when one dies. You don't mind; you're a man of leisure."

"O no, I'm a Professor of Human Nature," quoth Dick. So he remained with Litkip all day, and saw how the heirs were careful to give no more than the market value of family relics, how they were mutually anxious to "jew" each other, and mutually gratulatory when their best friends were "jewed."

Peter, mindful of the dignity of his office, never attended these vendues, but Richard was initiated into their mysteries by Mr. Province, who made it the main business of his life to attend sales, and had become a sort of walking cyclopædia of goods sold and prices ruling, during some twenty years. Dick at first considered this individual valuable authority, and would have been willing to bid on anything, from the best carpet to a mop-handle, at Province's dictum. Richard had not yet had the happiness of hearing Mrs. Province reproachfully assert that her shed room was so filled up with her beloved's vendue bargains that she could not find room in it to stand the coal scuttle, and that they had ten barrels of sundries which at different times the enterprising Province had bid off without examination or knowledge of their con-

tents, merely because they were cheap, and which contained nothing useful, even to the numerous Province family. The Province juveniles had their fingers pinched in traps, and cut with broken crockery, which their paternal relative had brought rejoicing from vendues; and these same infants were wont to raise horrid dins on rusty tin and broken tin-ware, obtained in the same manner. Indeed, Mrs. Province pathetically observed that the only way she could see of clearing out her encumbered establishment would be for herself and husband to die, that a vendue might be gotten up over their remains; which vendue, comprising the fragments of so many similar occasions, would be a subject of horror and amazement to all the neighborhood!

Dick always indulged in a purchase or two, for which Peter was troubled to find storage room.

"By and by our pastorate here will end," said Dick; "we will be forced to have a vendue, and I buy, that hereafter we may have something to sell!"

Vendues did not fill all the horizon of Richard's thoughts. In the exuberance of his desire to do something, he had half a dozen times made up his mind to institute alterations in the Rocktop church building, but when he came to consider what it needed, he could only say everything, and so he stopped appalled before such a labor, not being Hercules, nor even one of his descendants. We are undertaking no tragic tale; we are only recording some of the experiences of Pastor Peter's corollary, Dick; and as the church was a weekly experience, and one which greatly impressed our versatile young man, we should now give a more extended description of it.

This ancient and steepleless building looked like the relic of some pre-Adamite whirlwind; it was stranded hinds-side before near a straggling unkempt graveyard. The front door was in the back of the building, the windows that should have been in front had been forgotten, the pulpit was on the wrong side and nearer the ceiling than the floor, and the choir was where the pulpit should have been. Immense galleries went round three sides

of the church. The pulpit was very small, but what it lacked in area it made up in height.

Peter, being one of the sons of Anak, had no trouble in being seen, and when he had climbed the pulpit stairs, he commanded the galleries to the most hidden seat, and was a censor held in mortal terror by small boys who, had the rostrum been lower, would have had opportunity to antic unobserved.

Early on Sunday, vehicles began to gather at the ancient church. The sires of the community in busy knots compared watches, detailed the week's plans, discussed quinces and the bushels of lime per acre, unfolded rare discoveries in seed potatoes, and debated the city markets.

The respected matrons meanwhile exchanged notes on clothes, "the diseases of children," domestic economy, new comers, and the science of cookery, in Rocktop an inexhaustible theme. The young ladies tittered, gave and accepted invitations, admired the beaux, and criticised each other. The little children—except in the winter time—wandered into the cemetery, and gathered flowers and berries from above the ashes of their ancestors. The young men held *their* preliminary meeting across the road at the tavern; standing in the bar-room, about the stables, and before the doors.

Just at the last moment before service came Doctor Jehu, driving furiously, in a huge black ambulance. With Doctor Jehu came Peter, and as the pastor entered the church and set himself to clamber the stairs leading into the desk, there followed into the house the dignitaries and the lesser lights.

The fathers and mothers of Rocktop, and sometimes an "infant of days," filled the body of the church. Up into the gallery thronged the young ladies and children, and cooed and prinked, and fluttered for a time, like a flock of pretty pigeons on a roof.

Just as the invocation was concluded, Doctor Cor and his wife hurried up the aisle. Doctor Jehu viewed his brother practitioner from the corner of one un-devout eye; he knew when he would be even with him.

When the first verse of the first hymn was concluded, came the tramping of a host. The young men were aware that services had begun, and that it was time for them to arrive. On they came, a file a hundred strong; fine, well-dressed, hearty-looking fellows. To rack and ruin with the tavern opposite the church! the tavern which led so many of those lads astray!

Loud was the tramp of feet, but louder sang the choir. A few stragglers broke the solemnity of the Scripture reading and the prayer, but Peter learned to have the first hymn the longest; and as the negroes sing converts into the anxious seat, Peter had his young men sung into church.

That tavern across the road from the church was one of Peter's sorest grievances; it was a temptation to the young people more dangerous than can be described. There the young men could not buy liquor on Sundays, but they could pay for feed for their horses, and have refreshments for themselves thrown in; or, they could pay an exorbitant price for a cigar, and be treated to a glass of port or Bourbon.

As soon as service was concluded, out rushed the congregation into the Corn Exchange, or the Intelligence Office.

The masculines formed the first, in the lee of the grave-yard, where unnumbered members of this same Sunday Corn Exchange were waiting for the resurrection.

The feminines about the church door constituted the aforesaid office, standing in the footprints of so many other Sunday gossips, who now, under the grass within stone's throw, were taking their chances for the millennium.

There was one exception to this general rule of Sunday proceedings. The instant that the church debouched its worshippers, up dashed the Jehus' ambulance, and the Jehus whirled away, leaving a cloud of dust to their successors.

It was against Doctor Jehu's principles to be one moment late to church.

Doctor Cor could reconcile it to his conscience to sit at home and wait for patients until Doctor Jehu had been gone from his house half an hour.

Doctor Jehu compensated himself for this his adversary's advantage, by flying home without an instant's delay, at a break-neck speed.

Mrs. Cor *would* stop and exchange ideas with her friends and relations. Mrs. Jehu, a more amenable wife, swept her children into her carriage, as a hen sweeps up her piping brood from sight of a hawk.

This medical rivalry was a source of injury to Doctor Jehu on those especial week-days when was held the regular ante-communion service at the church.

Doctor Cor, not having the fear of God before his eyes, never thought of attending this service, and Dr. Jehu *could not* make up his mind to go and leave a clear field to his opponent. Therefore, on the day for this important assembling, Dr. Jehu ordered his carriage, put his wife and children therein, and sent them to gain what spiritual good they might. He conceived it to be his duty to the community to remain in his office, and do what in him lay to keep the ailing public from the clutches of Dr. Cor.

The professional feeling between these sons of Galen was most likely intensified by their being distantly related by marriage. Their houses stood in full view of each other, and thus by turns Doctor Jehu would be agonized by beholding a file eight long, of the maimed, the halt, and the blind, walking in procession to Dr. Cor's gate; and Dr. Cor, on his part, would be made to chew the bitter cud of envy and disappointment, and lose appetite for his dinner, when eleven carriages were tied before Doctor Jehu's fence, their horses' tails appearing, to Doctor Cor's jaundiced eyes, as so many flags waved defiantly by his adversary upon the outer wall. References made to royal David of Judah concerning the deaf and the blind were never so offensive—tanned hides shaken before Norman William's eyes were never so aggravating—as a carriage and pair prancing past Doctor Cor's house, and depositing a lonely cripple, or a case of compound scrofula, at the benevolent door of Doctor Jehu.

These were little spectacles which fre-

quently added relish to the often insipid existence of that choice spirit Dick.

Even Dick, in his most fault-finding mood, could not deny that that hill-embosomed village, over which forever brooded a Sabbath stillness, was beautiful. The white homes peered out among green trees; and the trees were hung with fruit, until the whole looked like a mass of pearls, opals, and emeralds, and the grain-fields growing bright in the sun, clasped it on every side, as a band of gold. Strangers thought it a restful haven for hot weather, and some of them found their way thither to board for the sultry months. One such stray came next door to Mrs. Graves. He was a fat individual, who was chiefly occupied in keeping his shirt-neck unbuttoned, his feet laid upon the window to cool, a wet handkerchief on his head, and himself faunted with a newspaper. He was contradictory, and loved to dispute every proposition advanced. Peter perceiving this, hoped that Dick would make his acquaintance, and being lured into argument, would leave his clerical relative rather more to himself.

But at this time our Richard got hold of a thick pamphlet, done up in pale buff, which seemed to occupy most of his time. Dick spread himself a blanket on the porch roof, and devoted himself to his pamphlet. Lying there, he was within reach of the stout disputant next door.

"What may you have to read, sir?" asked the boarder.

"Minutes," answered Dick.

"And what foolish modern novel may 'Minutes' be?"

"It is suggestive of terrible tragedies; of suicide in a moral way, and entirely pious murders; it is full of pathos, and provokes from the student of human nature—such as I am—both pity and wrath."

"Bless me! No novel would affect me that way!"

"This is not a novel, but sober fact."

"Whose life?"

"It is the statistical history of the ministers of the Church of my cousin Peter. I have been entering into a

mathematical calculation of the means of the Church, and the salaries paid her ministers. Sir, what may it cost a genteel family to live in a moderate way?"

"It has been much discussed lately in the papers, and opinions vary. Some say four or five thousand for five persons, others that four can get on nicely on twenty-five hundred. For my part, I could take care of six on that,—leaving operas, theatres, and horses out."

"Should you think that an average of five was too large to start on, as the number for minister's families?"

"You'd better by half say six, sir; old folks and all."

"We'll stick to five," said Dick. "Many of these men must have a horse; shall we say half?"

"Two-thirds, more like, it strikes me."

"We will say *half*," said the bland Dick. "Can you guess what is the average salary of these ministers?"

"All they're worth, I'll be bound. The fact is, sir, the world gives every man his hire. If he was worth more, he'd get more. Little pay, little man, I say."

"That don't hold true in the ministry; for here enters an idea of duty, and self-sacrifice, and the man works for the tithe of what he is worth, that he may work in his own profession, and keep his vow to devote himself to the salvation of souls. What is more calculated to make what you call a *little man*, than this little pay? Who could develop brain, with no books, and only half enough bread?"

"A man," cried the fat boarder, hotly, "is a fool to vow such a life; for I think there are plenty of people too stingy to be worth serving; and it is for these that men labor for nothing. But after all, sir, I think these ministers do as well as other people. I dare say, they average, each, twenty-five hundred dollars of salary. A few of them get from six to ten thousand."

"And some get one or two hundred! You are wrong; there is a multitude who do not get eight hundred."

"For my part, I never looked into these matters; but if I were a parson, and were turned off with such starvation

pay, I'd quit the business, and take to something better. I'd not be made a fool of in that fashion."

"Would you not think for these ministers to have a minimum salary of one thousand, a house, and a month of vacation, would be the least that should be offered? Then they would not starve."

"But they'd be plagued poor, after all, sir."

"They could shift on, and some would get more; at any rate, it would be better by half than most of them get now."

"Don't this church have any ecclesiastical authorities, any courts, anything to see that people that pretend to be Christians *give* like Christians? Why, if I was lord and master of a few of these rich fellows that spend thousands, and make their minister live—or die—on tens, I'd tumble 'em right out of the Church,—dash me if I wouldn't!"

"There are church courts, but they exert, it seems to me, precious little authority," said Dick, reflectively. "They don't appear to make members of churches, either individually or collectively, do their duty."

"Why, then, don't the minister stand up for himself like a man, and blow his

constituents sky high, for not paying him properly?"

"It would not be considered decorous."

"Not? Why, it's a business matter, ain't it?"

"It looks so to me; but church members, as a general thing, call it *charity*."

"Why, confound me, sir, if I'd give my brains and my time, and all that, to folks, and call the price of it charity! Is a lawyer's fee charity? Is the doctor's bill charity? Why is the parson's pay charity?"

"I don't think it can be reasoned out," said Dick; "but it is a popular idea."

The hot boarder fanned, and puffed, and mused. Then he spoke. "Sir, may I ask you how many years of education are needed to fit a man to obtain this small charity?"

Dick calculated—three in an academy, four in college, three in seminary; then cried out, "Ten, sir!"

"And in that time he cannot spend less than five hundred a year!" screamed the plethoric boarder. "Ten years and five thousand dollars gone, to be eligible for a starving charity, for which he dare not ask!"—the man's brain reeled, he rushed off to wet his pocket handkerchief!!

LIGHTS OF THE DARK AGES.

BY DAVID MAGILL.

IV.—ALFRED, THE KING.

ALL American and English school-boys are, or ought to be, acquainted with the story of the heroic and romantic life of this English king. They have heard the oft-told tale of the now famous griddle-cakes, and the account of the facetious harper spy in the tent of Guthrum the Dane; but although we all have some sort of idea that Alfred the Great was a man of learning, not merely like Charlemagne, a patron of letters, but himself an author, little is known of his works. He is known to have been a

legislator of wisdom and justice, but little is known of the subjects of his various enactments, their tendency or their influence. It is understood, too, that he flourished in the ninth century, but little is known of the state of society, literature, and religion, at that time in Continental Europe, or even in England.

All that is interesting in Europe of the ninth century, clusters around the throne of Charlemagne, who was crowned at Rome A. D. 800, and whose vast empire from the Baltic to the Adriatic,