

THE OLD CABINET.

A SINGULAR change has come of late over the face of Spring—which would be an odd remark at the shivery time of the year if I meant the season instead of my dog. I have been a long while absent from the old house, and upon my return, this evening, the brisk brown tail that once gyrated in such a spasm of glad welcome, wagged a most feeble greeting. The dog bounded not as of yore to my very shoulder, nor wheeled about me in ecstatic circles. There was a welcoming wriggle still, but not the old, abandoned, unkempt fury.

But as the dear fellow sits yonder near the andirons, there is a tender look in his dark eye that tells me, quite as well as the former agony of joy, that his cup runneth over with the happiness of my coming back. His front is to the fire, but his small, fine head is cocked on one side, while he watches me with full content. And as I look into that frank face of his, every line of which is as familiar to me as—my own, I notice the change of which I spoke.

The hair upon his forehead is turning white, two lines of gray run down even to the point of the nose, and there is a look of age about his features—about his whole bearing indeed—that I never noticed before.

When one comes to think of it,—as terriers go, Spring is an old dog. Many a summer has shed its leaves since we laid his mother in her narrow tomb,—a queer little African circus-dog, she—about half Spring's size, and with hide as bare and smooth as an elephant's, save for the half-dozen gray hairs that stood erect on her head, imparting an air of wise and sprightly venerableness,—and the scrimpy tuft at the end of her tail. And Spring's companions have likewise fallen away from him, one by one, leaving him to his solitary path and fireside—solitary save for human sympathy and cheer. Zoo was the last to go—that genial animal the tradition of whose early corpulence still in thin old age hung about his shrunken sides, rendering every movement replete with dignified unwieldiness.

The strangest part of this change in Spring is the old-young look. He seems like a boy with his grandfather's spectacles and wig. I cannot reconcile the gray hairs and weary movements with the atmosphere of youth that remains. His young soul surely is masquerading in this ancient guise. But I can see through the domino, my dog! You may not know that you are wearing any—you wonder, I think, at the unwonted film over the clear vision, at the invisible bands that bind those lithe and willing limbs.

What have the mutations of time, the chemic laws, to do with the souls of us? "He who loves is in no condition old." Spring, my dear fellow, do you love your master?

There, there! that will do, you young rascal,—Down, I say! Down!

I CONFESS that the Hon. Boanerges Brown is one of my stumbling-blocks. There he goes now on his way to Sunday afternoon service, with his godly little wife by his side and his gilt-edged hymn-book under his left arm. He doesn't look like a stumbling-block, you say—so smooth and shaven and broadcloth, with such a sunny smile, such a substantial air altogether; rather, think you, he points a moral as to the prosperity of the righteous—he represents the eternal fitness of things. Is he not, you ask, one of the pillars of the church, first and foremost in every good work; doesn't he teach in the Sunday-school; and make splendid temperance addresses; and isn't he a perfect model of a public-spirited Christian gentleman? And see how he neglects his own business for the Legislature, just on account of the example. 'Stumbling-block, indeed! I should say he was a stepping-stone, or a monument, or a statue, or something else very fine and inspiring.'

Theodosia, thou of the innocent eye and the unsophisticated understanding,—that is just it! Isn't he all this (from one point of view), and does he not do all that—and yet, my girl, don't I know him to be a man given to chicanery and deception, a buyer of votes, a corrupter of morals,—in a word, a politician in about the meanest acceptance of the term.

I say meanest, because I have a great deal more respect for the hard-fisted shoulder-hitter who earns a comparatively honest dollar on election day, by solid and congenial service at the polls; a great deal more charity for the low-lived, perjured "repeater"—than for the "Christian gentleman,"—God save the mark!—who sits in his parlor and counts out the money for their hire. And I have a much better opinion of the miserable drunkard who ends election day in the lock-up, than I have of the eminent temperance reformer who paid for the fellow's drinks.

Now, you know me well enough to know that I don't say this in any spirit of spite against the church or Sunday-school or temperance society to which the Hon. Boanerges belongs. I am talking simply about him, in the light of a stumbling-block. I say that I can't understand how the man reconciles his political actions with his conscience. He may be as sincere in his religious professions as he is earnest in his partisan performances; but somehow I can't put this and that together, and make anything but a jumble. And I say, moreover, that while to me he is an intellectual stumbling-block, to a good many other people, who may not be so firmly grounded in the faith,—some of his discerning political associates, for instance,—I happen to know that he is a very big and very ugly moral stumbling-block.

AND talking about stumbling-blocks, just let me tell you something, dear young person, which will be of service to you. I wish some kind old soul had told

me as much, in the callow days; it would have saved me many a misery.

It is the most natural first thought in the world—when you have found a friend,—“Now, if only my old friend knew this new one. These are just the two souls that should come together.” You talk to each of the other—they send postscript greetings in your letters—you carry loving messages between. O, if only they could meet, you say. Well, at last the interview is brought about, through much desire and contriving—you never rest till it is accomplished. But, lo and behold, instead of their running into each other like Avon and Severn, they come together with a grit. There is no use of stirring; they won't mix. Perhaps the very likeness that you saw holds the secret of their ill-adaptation. At any rate the meeting is a failure; it had been better had they never seen each other in the flesh. Before that, half your talk to Bill was about Ned; and each was as anxious as yourself that he should know this wondrous friend. Now, you do not care to mention either to the other. It is a great sorrow and a great mystery.

And it is the same with books. When you can count as many gray hairs as I can, my dear young person, you will not rush at every one you know with your latest literary enthusiasm. O my, don't I remember how it used to be—the surprises, the disappointments, the regrets! When I look back now, I wonder that I could have been so blind as to think that T. could have considered the writings of S. with any degree of allowance. All that made T. what he was, conspired to make it impossible for him to sympathize with S.; and the best proof in the world that S. was all I believed him to be, was the fact that T. found his works utterly uncongenial and insipid. But it was only after many mistakes and bitternesses that I learned philosophy.

And now,—well, there lies the book that, next to the Bible, I hold in deepest love and highest reverence. I cannot tell you all that book is to me: I think there is not a line of it I could spare; reading it, I am as one who walks on some mountain summit, when suddenly the clouds cleave apart, leaving him dizzy with the sense of height. It is art almost in perfection—and more than that it is, I verily believe, a “gospel of gospel to the world.”

There are three friends of mine, the familiar tread of whose feet in the hall would make me snatch that volume from the desk and thrust it into the secretest secret drawer of the Old Cabinet.

And there is a little poem in my breast-pocket—wise in a sort of child-wisdom, sweet and clear and musical as the sunset chimes that were sounding a moment ago from the belfry of St. John's,—yes and cheerier, for it celebrates that first Christmas morning

“In the bleak mid-winter
Long ago.”

Do you suppose I shall give Grandgrind or the Critic a peep at it? No—but I shall send you a copy, friend of my heart, come the blessed Christmas-time.

SINCE the account, in the October number, of “The Shaker Service,” several letters have found their way to the OLD CABINET, from Mount Lebanon. One of these is so ungentlemanly in tone and so gross in language, that we should doubt its having been actually written by the chief of that settlement, did we not detect therein the same allusions and modes of speech which render unsavory certain other writings of the distinguished Shaker it has been our misfortune to encounter.

But we very gladly give place to the following, which we think will be read with great interest and pleasure by all who have seen the Shaker service:—

“I was one of the sisterhood who helped to make up that grotesque procession on that lovely Sabbath morning, and it is now vivid in my recollection. Allow me to give *my* views concerning it. The morning was bright and beautiful, and, as my peaceful slumbers were broken, and I had returned thanks to Him who never sleeps, for his kindly care during the shadows of the night, I felt like singing—

“Blessed day of rest—the holy Sabbath!
Bless'd is the hour of devotion and praise!
Peaceful the influence, gentle the footsteps
Of angels, who will walk with us
In the temple to-day.”

“And to *me* there was more vital energy, deeper and closer communings of spirit with spirit, and of the inspiration which is the breath of life to the soul, in that meeting, than I should be able to feel in a dozen Episcopalian, Baptist, or Methodist meetings. I was reared in the Baptist Church, and am familiar with the worship of Presbyterians, Quakers, Congregationalists, and Catholics. The Shaker worship—‘the Shaker life, with its selfish self-denial,’ may, to the casual and external observer, appear ‘barren, false, ungodly;’ yet to many it is truly ‘a thing of beauty and a joy forever.’

“I well remember some of my thoughts while there assembled with the people of my choice. Perchance, at the very moment when our historian was looking at the ‘Shaker plaits and homespun brushing the worldly flounces,’ and drawing the great contrast, admiring the one and feeling ‘melancholy’ at the appearance of the other, I also was contrasting the two; and I think my feelings resembled one of old, when I thought of all the ‘oppression done under the sun (and even under the profession of Christianity), of the tears of the oppressed,’ and of the power of the wealthy classes still to oppress the poor, upon the principle that ‘*might makes right*;’ and I said in my heart, truly ‘God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions’ to live in pleasure and ease at the expense of his neighbor, who is as good (and possibly more worthy in the sight of God) as himself; and I felt that it was all ‘*vanity*,’ while *you*, my friend, looked upon them as a garden of flowers.

“Again: I thought of the great wrongs done under cover of those gaudy dresses and the costly jewels which hung upon the wearers—how much of this had

been unjustly taken from the hard earnings of the widow, while her orphan children were crying for a morsel of bread. Believe me, *I could not admire*; for I knew there was an eye which pierced through all the glitter and show of that gay throng, and saw diseased bodies, and *souls* too,—a spectacle enough to make angels weep.

“Pardon us, if *we* prefer preserving our *souls*, and *bodies* too, ‘blameless—spotless’ unto the coming of that day when all false covering will be removed and all shall appear just as we are, without any disguise, even though at the expense of pleasure, and in plain Shaker garb. The singing of birds, the fields so beautifully dressed in green, the mountains varying in proportion, the hills, and the valleys are all beautiful; *they* are not perverted, but are an honor to their Creator, and harmoniously speak forth his praise.

“Perhaps your Shaker friends are as keenly alive to the beauties of God’s creation as are those who ride in their gilded carriages, and seek to ornament the perishable body, while they neglect the *immortal part* which cannot die. A SHAKER SISTER.”

The sincerity with which you worshiped, dear Shaker Sister, on that bright Sunday morning of last July, and with which almost every one of your company seemed to worship, gave to the scene, otherwise so ridiculous to the eyes of strangers, the very charm and pathos of which we spoke. Wherever one human heart upreaches toward the heart of the universe,—wherever there is the desire of the soul, the groping, however blindly, toward the light, no matter amid what grotesque surroundings—Howling Dervishes or Dancing Shakers—there we recognize something pathetic—sacred—divine.

But, good Sister, you who profess the Faith of Christ in its simplicity and truth, do you not see how un-Christlike, false, affected this somber garb; how

elaborately artificial the outward show of your worship, how selfish and timid this seclusion—unlike, indeed, the manly, strong, helpful, far-reaching life of the Master of us all!

O fellow world’s people, shall these Shakers put a shame upon us? Better, ten thousand times sweeter and better, their Religion without Home, than this Home without Religion, which certain silver-tongued, so-called reformers are madly preaching from press and platform to-day!

THE second expedition to the Yellowstone recently returned from that region with stories even more marvelous than those brought by the Langford party of 1870. It has been said, in the West, that every man who goes up there loses his reputation for veracity. But we suppose the most incredulous will be compelled to believe the account of Prof. Hayden, who had charge of the government expedition of 1871; and it is proved by scientific measurements, made by him, that Langford had—with the bug-bears of unbelief and a lost character before his eyes—in many cases greatly underestimated the heights and depths and distances. We believe we do not err in stating that the calm judgment of science accords with the enthusiastic declaration of the first explorers, “that there is not on the globe another region where, within the same limits, Nature has crowded so much of grandeur and majesty with so much of novelty and wonder.”

One of the most striking peculiarities of the scenery is the wild, fantastic prodigality of color—and this feature, with the picturesque formations and grand sweeps and stretches of landscape, we shall hope to see faithfully reproduced upon the ample canvases which T. Moran, who accompanied the expedition, intends to devote to these unique, magnificent, and congenial subjects.

HOME AND SOCIETY.

THANKSGIVING.

WHEN the first Thanksgiving feast was spread under New England skies, a frugal banquet eked out with much godly conversation and prayer, our forefathers, partaking thereof in the spirit of edification, little guessed what far different Thanksgivings other years were to behold in the America of their adoption. They little dreamed that the day which to them was of such solemn significance, a Sabbath minus penalty and plus good cheer, was to become to their posterity an occasion for idle pleasuring only, for avoidance of customary business, for a dinner unusually profuse, and an evening of yawns and indigestion. For this, speaking in all honesty, is pretty much what our modern Thanksgiving has grown to be.

The religious character of the anniversary is almost lost sight of. Sermons, or what purport to be sermons, are duly preached; but were Elder Brewster to

sit among the congregations, we fear he would deny that name to those genial reviews of progress, past, present, and future—those diatribes on slavery, abstracts of the political situation, and short essays on social science, with which our pastors annually favor us. In the city no one considers church-going on Thanksgiving day a duty; and in the country good housewives listen with attention distributed between the Doctor,

“Bumming and bumming away o’er head,”

and the imaginary crackle of that distant turkey for which each feels herself individually responsible. While the men, though they say to each other on the way out, “First-rate discourse that of the minister, wasn’t it now?” are upon the whole glad to have it over, and be free to turn with undivided interest to what has grown to be considered the real event, the *raison d’être* of the day—namely, the dinner.