

THE INSTRUCTOR.

Not till we meet with Love in all his beauty,
In all his solemn majesty and youth,
Can we translate the meaning of life's duty,
Which God oft writes in cipher at our birth.

Not till Love comes in all his strength and power,
Can we read others' hearts; nor till then know
A wide compassion for all human error,
Or sound the quivering depths of mortal woe.

Not till we sail with him o'er stormy seas,
Have we seen tempests hidden in his hand
He holds the keys to all great emotions;
Till he unlocks them, none can understand.

Not till we walk with him on lofty mountains
Can we quite measure heights. And, oh, sad truth!
When once we drink from his immortal fountain,
We bid farewell to the light heart of youth.

Thereafter our most perfect day will borrow
A dimming shadow from some dreamed night,
So great grows joy it merges into sorrow,
And evermore pain tinctures our delight.

—Ella Wheeler Wilcox in New York World.

JEAN'S LETTER.

Six years old; breeches broken at the knees; hair blond, curly, so rich and thick it would have coiffed the heads of two pretty ladies; two great blue eyes that still tried to smile a little, though they had cried so much; a jacket well cut but falling to rags; a girl's shoe on one foot, a boy's boot on the other, both shoe and boot too wide and too long, turned at the toe and lacking in heels behind—this was Jean.

Little Jean, so cold and hungry this winter evening, who had eaten nothing since noon of the day before, and who had finally decided to write to the Virgin.

And how, say you, did Jean, who no more knew how to write than he knew how to read, arrange this letter?

Listen, for it is that which I am going to tell you.

Below there, in the quarter of the Gros-Caillois, at the corner of the avenue not far from the Esplanade, there was a shop, in the days I tell of, of a public writer, for in those days also there were so many claims and petitions to be made to the government and so many people, like Jean, that did not know how to write.

And the writer that kept this shop was an old soldier far on in years, a brave man but a little testy, who was anything but rich and had the additional misfortune of not being sufficiently chopped to pieces to secure admission to the Hotel des Invalides.

Jean, without prying at all, had many times seen him through the dingy glasses of his little cubby hole smoking his pipe and awaiting customers, and so today he entered fearlessly with a civil—

"Good-day, monsieur. I have come, if you please, for you to write me a letter."

"Ten sous, little one," Pere Bonin responded, gazing over his spectacles at the midged before him.

Jean had no cap, and was therefore unable to lift it, but he said very politely:

"Then excuse me!" and he turned to reopen the door.

But, pleased with his manners, Pere Bonin stopped him.

"Stay!" said he: "tell me first, little one, if you are the son of a soldier."

"Oh, no," said Jean, "only mamma's son, and she's all alone."

"I see," said the writer, "and you have not the ten sous?"

"No, no, no, at all," said Jean.

"Nor thy mother either, his plain to be seen! And thy letter, little one—is it to make the soup come?"

"Yes," said Jean, "exactly."

"Advance, then. Ten lines on a half sheet. One is never too poor for that!"

And Pere Bonin spread out his paper, dipped his pen in the ink, and wrote at the top of the page, in the beautiful hand of the quartermaster that once he had been:

PARIS, JAN. 17, 188—

To Monsieur:

"Well, go on," said he, "how do you call him, baby?"

"Who?" demanded Jean.

"Parbleu! the gentleman."

"What gentleman, monsieur?"

"The one to make the soup come."

Jean this time comprehended.

"But it isn't a gentleman," said he.

"Ah! bah! a lady, then?"

"Yes—no—that is—"

"Name of names! midged," Pere Bonin cried, "don't you know whom you are going to write a letter to?"

"Oh, yes!" said the child.

"Out with it, then, quick! I can't wait all day!"

But little Jean stood all red and confused. The fact is, it is not as easy as it looks to address one's self to public writers for correspondences of this kind, but Jean was brave and presently answered softly:

"It is to the Holy Virgin that I wish to send a letter."

"Nothing—just Jean."

Pere Bonin felt his eyes sting, but he only said:

"And what do you wish to say to the Holy Virgin?"

"To tell her that mamma's been asleep since four o'clock yesterday, and that I can't wake her up."

The heart of the old soldier suddenly stood still. He feared to comprehend. He demanded again:

"But that's no good, you spoke of a while ago?"

"Yes," said the child, "I know I had to speak of it, you see, because mamma before going to sleep yesterday gave me the last piece of bread."

"And what did she say, pray?"

"Nothing for more than two days—she always said she wasn't hungry."

"And you tried to wake her, say you—how?"

"As I always do—kissing her."

"Did she breathe?"

Jean smiled, and that smile made him beautiful.

"I don't know," said he. "Don't we always breathe?"

Pere Bonin had to hastily turn his head, for two big tears were rolling down his cheeks, and his reply to the child was another question:

"And when you kissed her," said he, "you noticed nothing strange?"

"Yes, I did," said Jean; "how cold she was; but then it's always so cold in our house."

"She shivered, then, your mamma—shivered with the cold?"

"No, she was just cold, but so pretty, her hands crossed so, her head back and her eyes looking at the sky."

"And I wanted riches!" Pere Bonin murmured. "I, who have enough to eat and drink, when here is one that died of hunger!"

And drawing the child to him he took him on his knee and softly began to talk to him.

"Thy letter, my baby," said he, "is written, sent and received. Now take me to thy mother."

"Oh, yes, I will, but—why do you cry?" demanded Jean, astonished.

"But I am not crying, Jean—no, men never cry! Thy son, my precious, who will soon do that!"

Then, straining him in his arms and covering him with kisses: "I, too, know you, little Jean, once had a mother, whom I see even now in her bed, so pale and white and saying to me, the image of the Virgin resting at her head: 'Bonin, my son, be an honest man always, and always a Christian! An honest man I have been, but a Christian—ah, dame!'"

He sprang to his feet, the child still hugged to his breast, and speaking as if to one invisible:

"But now, old mother, now, I say, rest thou in peace, for thou art going to have thy way. Friends may laugh and jeer if they will, but where thou art I wish to go, and there will I be led to this precious angel here, who shall never leave me again. His letter, which was never even written, has made a double shot—it has given him a father and me a heart!"

That is all: this story without end is done. I know no more save that somewhere in Paris today there is a man still young, a writer also, but not as Pere Bonin.

This man is a writer of eloquent things.

His friends still call him "Jean," as he called himself, and though I know not, either, the name of the postman that carries letters like these, they always reach their destination.—Translated from the French of Paul Favel for Short Stories

Hat and Cap Doffing.

There are many of us who still fail to comprehend how any rational being, how the Almighty himself, could feel honored by the uncovering of a human creature's cranium; and I am old-fashioned enough to be reminded of certain historical sayings regarding the doffing of head coverings.

George Fox used to ask if the very Turks did not mock at the Christians in their proverb which said that "the Christians spend much of their time in pulling off their hats and exhibiting their bare heads to each other."

His contemporary, George Keith, wrote: "The preachers of Germany, and especially at Hamburg, which I have seen with my eyes, use such gross partiality in their salutations that commonly they have two caps under their hats. The poor, except extraordinarily, they pass by without any notice; to others they doff the hat; others more rich in the world they salute with doffing the hat and one of the caps; and to those whom they most honor, or rather flatter, they doff the hat and both caps."

And did not our W. Penn say, in a more serious vein: "The first and most pressing motive upon our spirits to decline the practice of these present customs of pulling off the hat, bowing the body or knee, and giving people gaudy titles and epithets in our salutations and addresses, was that savor, sight and sense that God, by his light and spirit, has given us in the Christian world's apostasy from God, and the cause and effects of that great and lamentable defection."—American Notes and Queries.

Don't go to the beach on a hot day with the expectation of lowering your temperature. It is better at the seaside than in town, except when the wind blows from the east, and in that case it is easy enough to keep cool in town.

WHERE BEGGARS THRIVE.

Mexican Poverty Extremely Picturesque to a Casual Observer.

Chief among the many puzzling questions with which my childish mind whiled away the weary half hour of a Sunday morning sermon, was the existence of beggars in Bible days. I pictured Palestine to myself as a land of temples, tombs and gardens, inhabited by beggars and Pharisees. Born and reared in the prosperous west, poverty such as the scriptural tales dimly suggested was to me a thing as vague as the Hell of the same records, a fairy tale far more unreal than the sleeping palace or the caves of Aladdin. Now, the puzzle is solved, I have seen poverty, I have been to Mexico, I understand Palestine. I can almost believe in a horned Satan and fire and brimstone.

To a casual observer Mexican poverty is extremely picturesque. It is not an imitation of respectability such as the humblest American will attempt, but it is humanity in rags and nakedness, too often in sores, almost always in dirt. There, begging is a trade, the occupation of all the poorer population. Beggars infest the railroad stations at the interior towns, and a motley array it is. They are of all sexes, conditions and ages, with and without sores, the lame, the halt, and the blind. Babies in arms holding out dirty little hands for a "centavo," old women, young women, healthy little boys, crippled grandfathers all whining to the same time in their mongrel Spanish. "For the love of God, Señora, give me a cent."

Give them cents! I poured them out upon them. Never had a copper seemed of so much value. I luxuriated in their delight. I bought out the porter, the newsdealer and the conductor to satisfy the want that never could be satisfied; for there is a friendly feeling among these unfortunates, and when they find one who will give, they spread the glad tidings among all their class, and indeed I suspected them of telegraphing the information to the next station, so besieged was I for charity.

Some tourists who had been in the country before endeavored to impress me with the fact that I was encouraging idleness, but who would not be idle when the sun was hot and water a luxury and even for labor, money was not forthcoming. They must live. To live they must eat, and it seems to me that in the more desolate portion of the country, to eat, they must beg.

Very picturesque were they seen from the car window in the soft gloom of the southern night, their dark eyes gleaming like stars under their quaint hat or still more primitive head dress, their white teeth glittering as the musical Spanish rippled forth in compliments calculated to appeal to the generosity of the seniors who seemed to them a small sized Providence. In the cruel glare of the sun defects became evident, and one saw the coarseness in the squalor and dirt, still never did they cease to be poetic. They harmonized so perfectly with the background of cloudless sky, antique buildings, and tropical verdure. There was a beauty even in their very ugliness which was a plea for their existence and in remembering the pleasant journey of my life I shall always have a very tender recollection of the beggars of Mexico.—Edith M. Day in Lewis & Dryden's Railway and Marine Gazette.

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