

THE WEEKLY DIRECTORY.

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relatives who visited the home could see that the mother's health was failing faster and faster, though she kept going. She was almost at death's door. But Hans and Maria did not know it until one day the doctor come and when he went to leave little Maria went out to the gate and wanted to know why he had been there. He then told her that her mother was sick and she must be his little nurse for her mother. Maria went to work waiting on and doing everything that was possible for a child to do for a sick person never dreaming that her mother would never be able to sit up again.

One morning Maria went into her mother's room and found her much worse. The kind woman had the servant to lift her little boy and girl upon the bed so she could talk to them. This was the first time that this dear woman had spoken to her little children about dying. She told them that she would not be with them much longer and that they must be smart little children and obey their aunt whom they would have to live with when she was gone. She also told Maria to be good to her little brother and try to teach him the best she could and for both of them to meet her in heaven. She knew how cruel her sister-in-law was to her own children and of course she thought that she would not be good to those who were not her own. Even though she knew how her children would be treated she tried to make it seem pleasant to them, for she knew that she was obliged to die and she was willing to leave her little boy and girl in the hands of Him who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

That night she died, and the servant had a hard time trying to comfort the little orphans, but at last she got them to sleep, and early next morning she carried them to live with their Aunt whom their mother had told them about.

Their Aunt was a very rich woman but was selfish as could be and did not believe in giving children anything except just enough to keep them from starving and freezing to death. Things went on from bad to worse, until it seemed sometimes that the poor little children could stand the harsh words of their Aunt no longer.

It was now just a few days before Christmas and they had not heard a kind word since their mother died in September. They would try to keep out of the

way of their Aunt, and would get off to themselves and talk about going to heaven to see their mother and wish so much that they could be with her where they knew they would not hear unkind words.

It was on the 23rd of December and their Aunt was very busy and every time they would go near her she would scold and send them away. Maria went to her room and was looking out the window at the beautiful sky just above the mountains, thinking about her mother when her little brother came in the room. She told him what she was thinking about, then looked around to find their clothes. She had decided she could stay with her Aunt no longer. So she tied a red pocket handkerchief around her little brother's ears, to keep them from getting so cold. Then she tied up all the clothes they had in another red pocket handkerchief and went to the closet and got a large red apple for Hans. This done, they started off hand in hand on a journey to heaven to see their mother. They started up the mountain, for heaven did not look far away to them. They only thought that they would get to the clouds just above those beautiful mountains, then they would be right in the gates of heaven. And Maria was sure that God would let her in, for she had been taught that he loved little children.

This was about noon on the 23rd of December when they started out on the journey which they had not dreamed would be the cause of so much struggle. They traveled on however, until it was about dark and Hans became very tired and wanted to eat his supper and go to sleep but they had no supper except the apple which she had, but she thought that she had better save it until the next morning, for she knew that they would be hungrier then. So she made a bed the best she could out of the clothes which she had in the red pocket handkerchief and let her little brother go to sleep. She could not sleep because she felt it was her duty to keep watch over her little brother. Next morning before sunrise they started on again. But poor little Hans was so tired and worn out from the day before that they could not get along fast. At last he became so tired that Maria could not get him to go so she rolled the apple along ahead and would tell him to go and get it. In this way she traveled a long distance. She then let him eat the apple for it was almost dark upon them again. But Maria was more encouraged than she had been before, because she was sure that she would soon see her dear mother, she thought too that this was the night for Santa Claus to come. They always look forward to his coming with so much pleasure. They went on and on until at last they saw a bright light some distance from them. Now they felt sure that they were near the gates of Heaven. So Maria wiped Hans eyes as he had been crying for quite awhile, and they both cheered up. By this time they were near enough to the house to hear the music that was going on inside, for some people were there practicing for the church service the next day. The little children were so happy that they shouted for joy. The kind man who was owner of the house heard these little children and went out to see who they were. After hearing their story he carried them into the house where he had his wife to give them hot supper

and put them to bed. The good woman was so nice and kind to them, and promised to let them enjoy the nice Christmas things with her own children the next morning.

After the children were asleep the good man and woman sat down and talked how they would endeavor to make those little children happy the rest of their lives. After talking it over they knelt down and the man prayed that God would give him power and strength to raise Hans and Maria in the right way. Then they took the light and went in to look after the pretty little strangers one more time. But when they reached their bed they found both of the little children dead. Their life had been worn away and at last they had joined their dear mother in that beautiful home where no sorrow ever enters.

Sudie G. McCauley.

"THE SCARLET LETTER"—A LITERARY MASTERPIECE.

"The Scarlet Letter" is the masterpiece of Hawthorne's vigorous, creative genius, and also is one of the greatest of American romances. Its plot is weird, intense and thrilling; and while the characters are not perfectly natural; they are vivid and picturesque.

None of our American writers have equalled Hawthorne in point of beauty, purity and simplicity in the use of language. His simplicity has an exquisite charm that does not suggest shallowness of thought; for Hawthorne's books are a study of the emotions and passions, with a discriminating analysis of them. His words are so well chosen and carefully used that an exact shade of meaning is mirrored in each line. He does not use many rare words, but confines himself to everyday language; and with this simple speech he succeeds in giving delicacy, freshness and strength to his paragraphs.

The flow of words seems uniform throughout the book. There is no unevenness or hastiness. The language is always smooth and calm. Even in his vivid descriptions of passion there is deliberateness. Hawthorne never hurries a passage or hastens a climax.

In contrast with other novels there is a marked absence of the conversational style in them. His characters do not talk much but in their thinking he probes into remote recesses of the soul and lays bare the hidden motives.

"The Scarlet Letter" is to be commended because the blackness and hideousness of sin is brought to light. The sinner suffers the consequences of willful transgression. The torments of a relentless retribution could not be more faithfully portrayed. Perhaps no other novel has been written that so truly and forcibly conveys this moral lesson.

There may be improbabilities in "The Scarlet Letter." In some particulars it may not be true to life yet its main thought, "the way of the transgressor is hard," is faithfully demonstrated. The mental suffering of the conscious sinner is delineated.

There is one feature of the book to be deplored. Why did the author cast a shadow upon the noblest of callings by making Arthur Dimmesdale, the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, a godly pastor? There is so much in the careless, thoughtless world that causes scoffing at sacred things; that it is lamentable to have any tendency that

may be augmented by one of the masterpieces of literature—a book that will be read by young and old.

This dangerous tendency is augmented by the fact that while Arthur Dimmesdale was a guilty man, realized his guilt, saw the open shame and degradation of little Pearl and Hester Prynne yet his work as a pastor was successful. Hester Prynne is not attractive. She is cold, unresponsive and not at all lovable. Perhaps her blighted life had much to do with that mantle of marble coldness, she is also repulsive and does not excite pity. There is nothing in her, wild, selfish child, to develop love and tenderness, for "in giving her existence a great law had been broken; and the result was a being whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant but all in disorder."

It is easy to picture what might have been, had the child been different, but there was no comfort for Hester, in this uncomfortable bit of humanity, yet she is a link between the two, and a subtle influence goes out from her strange life.

Roger Chillingworth is a strong impersonation of revengeful spirit, bitter, never tiring, haunting his victims day and night.

The chapter entitled, "Revelation of the Scarlet Letter" is the climax of the story. It is one of the finest in literature. The denouement is tragic. Arthur Dimmesdale, at last gained the victory over himself and notwithstanding his position of confidence and trust makes a confession of his sins.

"The Scarlet Letter" is very pleasing in its portrayal of New England life. It is highly flavored with Puritanism and the quaint customs and conversations of the people give a peculiar beauty to the entire story.

It is a magnificent book and is justly entitled to a place among the classics. Perhaps no novel has been written, that so powerfully reveals the heart in its inner consciousness.

Ethel B. DuRant.

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