

# The Orphans' Friend.

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## MAN'S MORTALITY.

The following beautiful poem is justly considered a poetical gem of the highest order. The original is found in an Irish MS. in Trinity College, Dublin.—There is reason to think that the poem was written by one of those primitive Christian bards in the reign of King Diarmid, about the year 554, and was sung or chanted at the last grand assembly of kings, chieftains, and bards, ever held in the famous Halls of Tara. The translation is by the learned Dr. O'Donnovan.—*Ex.*

Like the damask rose you see,  
Or like a blossom on a tree,  
Or like the dainty flower in May,  
Or like the morning to the day,  
Or like the sun, or like the shade,  
Or like the gourd which Jonas had!  
Even such is man, whose thread is spun,  
Drawn out and out, and so is done.  
The rose withers, the blossom blazeth,  
The flower fades, the morning hasteth,  
The sun sets, the shadow flies,  
The gourd consumes, the man—he dies.

Like the grass that's newly sprung,  
Or like the tale that's new begun,  
Or like the bird that's here to-day,  
Or like the pearled dew in May,  
Or like an hour, or like a span,  
Or like the singing of a swan;  
Even such is man, who lives by breath,  
Is here, now there, in life and death.  
The grass withers, the tale is ended,  
The bird is flown, the dew's ascended,  
The hour is short, the span not long,  
The swan's near death, man's life is done.

Like to a bubble in the brook,  
Or in a glass much like a look,  
Or like the shuttle in weavers' hand,  
Or like the writing on the sand,  
Or like a thought, or like a dream,  
Or like the gliding of some stream;  
Even such a man, who lives by breath,  
Is here, now here, in life and death.  
The bubble's out, the look forgot,  
The shutter's flung, the writing's blot,  
The thought is past, the dream is gone,  
The waters glide, man's life is done.

Like to an arrow from the bow,  
Or like swift course of water flow,  
Or like that time 'twixt flood and ebb,  
Or like the spider's tender web,  
Or like a race, or like a goal,  
Or like the dealing of a dole  
Even such is man, whose brittle state,  
Is always subject unto fate.  
The arrow shot, the flood soon spent,  
The time no time, the web soon rent,  
The race soon run, the goal soon won,  
The dole soon dealt, man's life soon done.

Like the lightning from the sky,  
Or like a post that quick doth lie,  
Or like a quaver in a song,  
Or like a journey three days long,  
Or like snow when summer's come,  
Or like the pear, or like the plum;  
Even such is man, who heaps up sorrow,  
Lives but this day, and dies to-morrow,  
The lightning's past, the post must go,  
The song is short, the journey so,  
The pear doth rot, the plum doth fall,  
The snow dissolves, and so must all.

## THE CAUSE OF EDUCATION IN JAPAN.

When the news came a few months since, that a reactionary movement in regard to education in Japan had set in, the friends of education in the United States were apprehensive that it was but preliminary to the abolishment of the comparatively liberal system which the Japanese government was induced to adopt some years

since at the earnest request of the friends progress, both native and foreign. American educators felt especial solicitude in regard to the matter; since they have taken a deep interest in the remodeling and enlarging of the educational system of Japan, and some of them have been employed in the work. The educational authorities of that empire have for years made a close study of the American system of instruction, and have adopted many of its most desirable features. The foreign superintendent of educational affairs in Japan, Dr. David Murray, is an American, while certain schools are supplied with American teachers. The result has been so entirely satisfactory that the cause of education in Japan has gained a large number of warm friends among the progressives of the empire. Late authentic advices received by the United States Commissioner of Education are, however, calculated to correct the impression made by the intelligence of a few months ago. It appears that in January last, the educational appropriation was diminished, whereupon the department of educational affairs at once began to cast about for ways in which to bring its expenses within the reduced appropriation. There were nineteen schools of a higher character in the empire, which included the University of Tokio, the medical college of Tokio, and a number of English language and normal schools—all of which were mainly supported by the government. When the crises came, it was determined to maintain all the schools by exercising unusual economy in their administration; to consolidate when practicable, as in the case of the Tokio female normal school and girls' school, and in some cases to transfer as far as possible to the local governments the support of some of these schools. Fewer foreign teachers will be employed, and the appliances of education will be less liberally provided; but the friends of education regard this curtailment as much better than utter abandonment. It has been a gratifying circumstance that the local communities are unwilling to lose the schools which have been opened, and cooperate heartily with the local governments in arrangements for their continuance. As the resources of the empire are likely to be restricted for some time to come, it is possible that some modification of the educational scheme may be necessary, but the friends of education, both in Japan and in this country, are assured that the more important features of the present system will be retained.—*Washington Evening Star.*

## AN ANCIENT BOOK ROLL.

Several sorts of materials were anciently used in making books. Plates of lead or copper, the bark of trees, brick, stone and wood, were originally employed to engrave such things and documents upon as men desired to transmit to posterity. Deut. 27: 2, 3; Job 19: 23, 24. God's laws were written on stone tables. Inscriptions were also made on tiles and bricks, which were afterwards

hardened by fire. Many of these are found in the ruins of Babylon. Tablets of wood, box and ivory were common among the ancients: when they were wood only, they were oftentimes coated over with wax, which received the writing inscribed on them with the point of a style, or iron pen, (Jer. 17: 13) and what was written might be erased by the broad end of a style. (Luke 1: 63.) Afterwards, the leaves of the palm tree were used instead of wooden tablets, and also the finest and thinnest bark of trees, such as the lime, the ash, the maple, the elm; hence the word *liber*, which denotes the inner bark of trees, signifies also a book. As these barks were rolled up to be more readily carried about, the united rolls were called *volumen*, a volume; a name given likewise to rolls of paper or of parchment. The ancients wrote likewise on linen. But the oldest material commonly employed for writing upon, appears to have been the papyrus, a reed very common in Egypt and other places, and still found in Sicily and Chaldea. From this comes our word *paper*. At a later period, parchment from skins were invented in Pergamos, and was there used for rolls or volumes. The pen for writing on these soft materials was a small brush, or a reed split on the end. (Jer. 3: 23.) The ink was prepared with lampblack, coal of ivory, various gums, etc., and the writing was sometimes permanently fixed by fire. Scribes carried their inkhorns hanging to their girdles. (Ezek. 9: 2.) The making of paper from linen, in its modern form, was first known in Europe about A. D. 1300. The art of printing was introduced about one hundred and fifty years later.—*Our Monthly.*

## A REMARKABLE WOMAN.

John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism, derive their greatness, like many eminent men, from their mother. She was an extraordinary woman, gifted with great intelligence and force of character. The father was eccentric and wayward, liable to strange impulses. But the mother was calm in temperament, uniform in her methods, and of inflexible purpose. She ruled in her home, and the children learned from the cradle to yield to her unquestioning obedience.

The quiet of the house was a mystery to her neighbors, for nineteen children (thirteen were living at one time) are apt to make a riot in any household. But visitors often said that they would not have known there was a child in the family. She did not allow them to cry in infancy, or romp in the house when older. She was their teacher, beginning their instruction at five years of age, by making them learn the alphabet in a single day. Then they were put to spelling and reading one line, then a verse, never leaving it till it was known perfectly. Their progress was very rapid under her wise guidance. But though the family government was so rigid, it was administered with love, and they had the reputation of being the most loving family in the county of Lincoln.—*Youth's Companion.*

## CAPTAIN BURTON'S DISCOVERIES IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN.

A correspondent of the *Times*, writing from Alexandria, informs the public that captain Burton, the African traveler, has made a "find" of unusual interest. At the request of the Khedive he has visited the "land of Midian," the desolate region on the eastern side of the Gulf of Akabab, the easternmost of the two long and narrow estuaries in which the Red Sea ends.

Accompanied by M. George Marie, a French engineer, Captain Burton landed in Midian on the 2nd of April, and in an exploration of some weeks, explored a region full of ruined towns, built of solid masonry, with made roads, aqueducts five miles long, artificial lakes and massive fortresses, all making a wealthy and powerful people. Their wealth was based on mining operations, and Captain Burton reports the existence of gold, silver, tin, antimony, and turquoise mines. The auriferous region is extensive; indeed, the discoverer believes he has opened up a California, and the Khedive proposes to have the country worked by European capitalists.

It will be remembered that in the Bible, Midian is always described as a land full of metals, especially gold, silver, and lead. It is more than probable that Solomon's Ophir was situated there, as the small ships in which he imported gold, ivory, and peacocks were launched at the head of the Red Sea. Midian is part of the Egyptian Viceroyalty.—*London Spectator.*

## GLASS AND ITS PHENOMENA.

The elasticity of glass exceeds that of almost all other bodies. If two glass balls are made to strike each other at a given force, the recoil, by virtue of their elasticity, will be nearly equal to their original impetus. Connected with its brittleness are some very singular facts. Take a hollow sphere, with a hole, and stop the hole with the finger, so as to prevent the external and internal air from communicating, and the sphere will fly to pieces by the mere heat of the hand. Vessels made of glass, that have been suddenly cooled, possess the curious property of being able to resist hard blows given to them from without, but will be instantly shattered by a small particle of flint dropped into their cavities. This property seems to depend upon the comparative thickness of the bottom; the thicker the bottom is, the more certain of breakage by this experiment. Some of these vessels, it is stated, have resisted the stroke of a mallet given with sufficient force to drive a nail into wood; and heavy bodies, such as musket balls, pieces of iron, bits of wood, jasper, stone, etc., have been cast into them from a height of two or three feet without any effect, yet a fragment of flint not larger than a pea dropped from three inches high, has made them fly.—*Ex.*

"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright."

## "SELAH."

The *Bibliotheca Sacra*, in referring to the meaning of the Scriptural word "Selah," says that the Targums, and most of the Jewish commentators, give the word the meaning of *eternally, forever*. Rabbi Kimchi regards it as a sign to elevate the voice. The authors of the Septuagint translation appear to have regarded it as a musical or rythmical note. Hender regarded it as indicating a change of note; Matthewson, as a musical note, equivalent, perhaps, to the word repeat. According to Luther and others, it means *silence*. Gesenius explains it to mean, "Let the instruments play and the singer stop." Wocher regards it as equivalent to the expression—"Up, my soul!" Summer, after examining all the seventy-four passages in which the word occurs, recognizes in every case "an actual appeal or summons to Jehovah."—*Baptist Family Magazine.*

## A SILK-SPINNING FISH.

There is a mollusk—the *pinna* of the Mediterranean—which has the curious power of spinning a viscid silk which is made in Sicily into a flexible fabric. The operation of the mollusk is rather like the work of a wire-drawer, the substance being first cast in a mould formed by a sort of slit in the tongue, and then drawn out as may be required. The mechanism is exceedingly curious. A considerable number of the bivalves possess what is called a *byssus*, that is, a bundle of more or less delicate filaments issuing from the base of the foot, and by means of which the animal fixes itself to foreign bodies. It employs the foot to guide the filaments to the proper place and to glue them there; and it can reproduce them when cut away. The extremity of the thread is attached by means of its adhesive quality to some stone; and this done, the *pinna*, receding, draws out the thread through the perforation of the extensible member. The material when gathered is washed in soap and water, dried, straightened, and carded—1 lb. of coarse filament yielding about 3 ozs. of fine thread, which, when made into a web, is of burnished golden brown color. A large manufactory for this material exists in Palermo.

## CONSCIENCE.

When peace reigns in the conscience there is always power over sin. Peace is like a sentinel, which keeps guard at the door of the heart; if the sentinel be away from his post, either the tumult within drowns the voice of the Spirit—or the stillness of death prevents His voice from being heard. A guilty conscience is one of Satan's great weapons against the children of God; faith can only be bold as the conscience is clean.—*Central Protestant.*

A Scotchman asked an Irishman, "Why were half-farthings coined in England?" Pat's answer was, "To give Scotchmen an opportunity of subscribing to charitable institutions."