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KENSINGTON CHURCH.

SOME one has said that "the next best thing to being a beauty, is to be regularly ugly!" Could our old church, old enough to be sinking into decay, yet not old enough to be quite venerable, have had a voice in the subject of its own erection, it must certainly have decided on being—regularly ugly. As in humanity, however, it appears insensible of its own want of charms, and has surrounded itself with a garland of green beauty, in the shape of a thoroughly picturesque churchyard.

There is much to interest eye and heart in this "God's acre," as our Saxon fathers would have called it; much to awaken thought and emotion, though it stands in the midst of buying and selling, amid the money changers, not near the sellers of doves truly, but with noise and tumult, and disorder around.

At first we are shocked at the rough echoes of busy life, which are borne over the quiet sleepers; we should feel happier if the public house were removed, and the dealers in fish, vegetables, &c., obliged to pitch their tents a little farther from the scene where so many lie, who have entered into that silent kingdom which gives a kind of majesty to the meanest.

Still there is another phase in which we may take this mingling of those who rest from their labors with the many moving in the throng of life's market, exchange, and strife! Perhaps the dead seem thus less put aside and forgotten, less removed from human interests and sympathies. Are not the slumberers lying so close to us something like the ancestor reverently embalmed in the fine linen of Egypt, to whom the best chamber of the mansion was allotted among certain nations of antiquity? Are they not a little like those who filled funereal urns in the dwellings that had been their own, where, enshrined as tutelary spirits, they became the Penates of the household?

But to return to the church. According to old records, there appears to have existed a temple for christian worship in this spot as far back as when Doomsday Book was compiled, and probably there had been one far earlier in the older times. We may conjecture what it was like, and fairly presume that

it was more picturesque than our present church of St. Mary Abbot's; by the by, the name is a vestige of its old connexion, as it appears to have once been a dependence of the abbots of Abingdon, Berks.

After the Reformation, the rectory, or right of tythes, &c., appears to have been farmed by various individuals, and, in Elizabeth's reign, an enterprising lady, (who, if she had lived now, would certainly have voted for female emancipation), held the same on a long lease! The covenant of tenure was drawn up in Latin, so we may gather that the lady was learned, as well as clever, practically, for she was too good a woman of business, this Elizabeth Snow, to have signed her name to a blind bargain.

When Charles the First closed his unhappy career, the tythes of Kensington were again in female hands, those of the Countess of Mulgrave, and another lady, the Dowager Countess of Holland, was patroness of the vicarage. Here were women who had a conception of harder work than voting! We wonder whether the one always exacted the last mite of her tythes, or sometimes relented, when there was a deficit in first fruits: we wonder if the other was a woman of nice judgment, who would choose a vicar for his piety, worth, and learning, or for his fluent, silvery speech!

Retracing our steps, we find an interesting character connected with Kensington, one Sebastian Harris, who suffered persecution for the truth in 1527. The royal despot then reigning, predestined eventually to do a great and good deed, had not yet made up his mind to strike the axe straight to the heart of the old superstitions; it was still dangerous to have the lamp of the Holy Scriptures in one's house. Sebastian Harris, in the midst of the gross darkness and error which surrounded him, possessed a Bible in his mother tongue, probably he could not have understood it in its old garb, for Gerard Erasmus had not yet made learning the fashion; Sebastian, perhaps, had only Latin. We are not plainly told whether he had received the light, but we may gather that he had, for he added to the first crime of Bible reading, that of holding a heretical volume, entitled "Unio Dissidentium." We fear that this poor Kensington curate was more of a student than a bold, brave man, ready to stand and battle for the truth. It does not appear that he resisted to the death, as stronger hearts afterwards did, in fighting against ecclesiastical tyranny and corrupt practice. He seems to have succumbed to his superiors, and humbly stood, or knelt, in old St. Paul's, vowing neither to read, lend, or sell the heretical books, and ever more to abjure intercourse with any man holding the damnable doctrines of the arch-apostate, Luther. Furthermore, poor Sebastian, when thus humbled, must have suffered a further degradation, for he was banished from London for a certain season, and deprived of his curacy.

Edward the Sixth was patron of Kensington, and, under him, the vicar enjoyed a revenue of £18. a year, which, even considering the different value of money in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, was not a very rich living.

It is noticeable, that when, shortly after the Reformation, an inventory was made of the property of the parish church here; it was pretty long, and contained a great variety of articles, but if we remember rightly, among them all there were only three or four books. We are glad to find that a commentary, by Erasmus, was among them, which shows that bolder men than Sebastian Harris had sprung up.

A very interesting, though imperfect account is to be found of an arch-deacon's visitation of this parish, as far back as the year 1612. If visitations were made in a similar spirit, and with the same scrupulous attention, now-a-days, among all our churches, how much childish nonsense, and how many ugly excrescences might be swept away! How much of yet uglier controversy, and how many quarrels, between rectors and churchwardens, and congregations!

The visitation, however, contains what would seem strange matter in our day, a curious intermeddling with private concerns, which would ill agree with our present notions.

Among the vicars of Kensington, we find the deservedly famous divine and scholar, Dr. Jortin, a Frenchman, if a man may truly claim his father's nationality, but an Englishman, a thorough Englishman, in mind and character.

A life of success, promising a great posthumous reputation, closed as calmly as a serene day in Autumn. Among his last words were some most pithy sentences: on being offered refreshment by his nurse, he quietly answered, "No, I have had enough of everything!" He said, with regard to the publication of his sermons, "Let them sleep till I sleep!"

Dr. Jortin lies buried in "God's-acre" of Kensington Parish, a parish he loved so well as to refuse a richer living that he might live and die amid scenes that had become endeared to him by long association. The epitaph on his tombstone is beautiful and striking; on such a day, not he died, but

"Mortalis esse desiit."

St. Mary Abbot's may be said to have gone through a series of buildings and pullings down and buildings again, and rendings and repairs, and crackings and shoreings up, and patchings of all kinds, since the year 1683; it seems to have suffered the fate of the garment mentioned in Scripture, to have received the new piece upon the old material and had the rent made worse! All the attempts made to repair and fortify the building have been signal failures. We are forced to arrive at the conclusion that we must begin the work again by laying firm foundation stones for an edifice commensurate in some measure to the purpose for which it is intended, commensurate to the wealth of our community, and not so humble a temple as to be put to shame by the princely private dwellings around us. If we build a Christian church in our midst, in any way corresponding to our luxurious secular surroundings, we should endow Kensington, the fairest suburb of London, with a magnificent cathedral. Why should we not attempt great things? Why should we not do them?

We have our magnificent Park and Gardens, such as no other European city owns; we have our Italian Winter Garden, laid out at immense cost; our Hall of Art and Science rising; the magnificent Memorial of the good Prince growing month by month; and the private houses of wealthy individuals, so luxurious as almost to make them forget their immortality.

"Shall we be as the dregs of the people?" said old John of Gaunt, lamenting that his countrymen were destitute of Scripture in their own tongue, while others possessed the inestimable advantage he coveted for them. "Shall we be as the dregs of the people?" May we not say, shall we be the only parish content to let our old church stand as long as it will stand, a helpless

invalid supported on crutches, and finally falling around us, perhaps overwhelming a host of worshippers in its fall!

Will it not be comparatively easy to rear a new and magnificent church? The only thing wanting must be time: we shall surely all come forward with free-will offerings for so noble a work.

Suppose the old church razed, the new one in course of erection, reverent care being had to disturb no sacred dust sleeping beneath, and to suffer no desecrating finger to impair the monuments, for even those that boast little beauty have an interest. There is the memorial of the last Earl of Warwick and Holland of the Rich family. The figure seated, leaning against an urn, and clad in a Roman toga, appears to represent the last of a race founded by a successful goldsmith; the epitaph states the mournfully abrupt close of the line, and the rather feminine, yet haughty face of the monumental statue, has a sort of defiant air which appears to challenge a contradiction.

There is a marble tablet near the font, surmounted by an urn, and bearing an inscription, at once pious and sensible; it is in memory of one John Hall, "For those who remember him, that name was his best epitaph; to others it may be useful to record, that he was one who in life by good works and by fervent faith in death, proved that the source of virtue is in the love of God."

"Oh friend in life's alternate season tried!
Who liv'd for all, for all too early died:
Fond nature weeps that here thy prospects fade,
And death debars thee from the long sought shade,
But faith reflects, to thee on Earth was given
To toil and suffer, thou hast rest in Heaven."

Dull and homely lines enough, according to our present standard of taste; but what feeling heart can be other than touched by so artless a tribute to virtue and piety.

On a marble slab, on the East wall of the church, without, there is a pleasing epitaph to James Elphinstone; how perfect a man, if he truly deserved the following—"His manners, though polished, were simple; his integrity was undeviating; he was a great scholar, and a real Christian. Jortin, Franklin, and Johnson were in the number of his friends!" But better still if the last few words had been his sole epitaph, they would have told all!

An individual had been buried in this same ground three hundred years back, whose life was a sad contrast to this gentle scholar's, one John Meutis, who had made a sort of contract with the then king, by which he was formally, in a written deed, forgiven and absolved from all outlawry and all other consequences, neglects, contempts, concealments, conspiracies, *extortions*, *murders*, and whatsoever other *felonies* and *enormities* he may have been guilty of!"

Here lies a man who bears the singular name of Sir Manhood Penruddock, he was slain in a combat, of what kind does not appear, though we may fairly suppose it was in some quarrelsome fray, in which he had resolved to show himself worthy of the name his sponsors had bestowed upon him, either in admonition, or in prophesy.

Near the principal gate lies buried a son of that good divine, Bishop Watson, who, from the lowly position of an obscure schoolmaster, made himself not only a prelate but a man of honorable reputation.

Mrs. Inchbald's grave is in the north-west corner of Kensington Churchyard: a woman of great personal beauty and of yet greater fascination; authoress of some charming comedies, "Every one has his Fault," "Such things are," "Lover's Vows," &c. &c.; but whose reputation chiefly rests upon a little novel, "The Simple Story," which is, in fiction, as sweet and delicate as the lily-of-the-valley among flowers.

The two Colmans, dramatists, also sleep here, the elder had the honor of writing in partnership with Garrick "The Clandestine Marriage."

Not far off lie the mortal remains of Spofforth, the composer of sweetly accorded glees, who died at an early age, but had certainly lived a good deal in his brief span of life; a good deal in feeling if not in action; living not as a peri on sweet scents, but on sweet sounds.

A young son of George Canning, the Statesman, is here buried; a few lines testify to the youth's worth and the father's tender regret; the verses have been called artificial, but there is nothing to lead us to suppose them insincere; they have a smoothness of numbers and a scholarly elegance about them which we cannot help admiring, despite their being of that old-world versification which is too fast becoming obsolete.

Among the grass-grown graves rises the head-stone of Bianchi, a composer of reputation, who had "a heart of that fine frame" that he died of grief for the death of a beloved child.

F.

MY ARGOSY.

The merchandise upon the waves is cast,
The cordage droops above each broken mast,
The sails are rent, and shivering in the blast!

My argosy comes back!

It hath been roaming o'er a troubled sea,
And wave and sky, their fury setting free,
Have spent their wrath upon it; thus to me

My argosy comes back.

What say the captain and the sailor bold?
"It is ill sailing, skies are drear and cold.
The anchor's dropped, so let it safely hold."

My argosy comes back.

It brings no fruit for years of toil and strife,
No precious thing to soften rugged life,
No seeds of unborn hopes with joyance rife.

My argosy comes back.

Yet go thou forth once more upon the main,
Yet go thou forth, dare wave and rock again!
Hope and high courage pilot not in vain!

Go forth my argosy!

Kensington.

E.

THE HISTORY OF A WOMAN'S HEART.

By the Author of "Anne Sherwood."

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A REAL ADVENTURE, AND MORE DREAMS.

I had no friends in London, I could not have been more alone in the world had I really come to ask permission to win my bread.

My parents had had no near relatives, and had been for many years cut off from all former connexions, or acquaintance with the great city. I had, consequently, nothing to expect in the way of companionship.

I tried to banish this idea of loneliness, and, as I was young, my mind was naturally somewhat touched with an interest and curiosity which went beyond the great dome and the spectral horse.

The day after my arrival in London, I arose with the full determination to proceed methodically to work, and begin my inspection of objects about which I knew as little as I did of the Sahara. Dear reader, I, poor little country maiden, did not know then that sight-seeing was vulgar; I fancy that many people, in my position in life, do not yet know that great fact!

I went out, intending to go to the National Gallery, but a more deeply interesting London sight was reserved for me first.

A ragged urchin stopped me on the road, and deluded me into a baker's shop, and then into a wretched celiar in Drury Lane, where his mother lay dying in consumption, and his sister was making what they call "slop work" shirts, at two pence halfpenny a piece!

The woman had a hectic cheek and glittering eye: she was not absolutely confined to bed by her disease; no, only kept there by cold, the cold which pinched her daughter's red fingers while she worked.

Poor mother! The heavy mangle which rested in the corner had been her death, her slow and sure death; dragging round the handle hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year, to give her children bread.

At last the weak arms could drag the load no more, and dropped down, helpless, dying, and the family had to live on the girl's work, till at last the mother had sent out her youngest born to get a few pence, as he could; he was to sweep a crossing: but the boy was eight years old, the broom was heavy, perhaps he really lost it, as he said, when he fell asleep on the door step.

So the child took to begging, and in time the Arab of the street learnt to play pitch and toss, and the petty gambling too often diverted the halfpence that should have been carried to his mother.

But the boy vagrant had still a heart, and Arab though he had grown, he determined, when he saw tears on his mother's cheek, that he would help her; his first attempt to do that, was to pick my pocket!