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THE OLD CLOCK.

BY REV. M. GUY PEARSE.

EVERY body in the place could tell you where Dan'el Quorm lived. You reached the little thatched cottage, crowned by luxuriant masses of the yellow stone-wort, and all girt about with fuchsias, while the dainty little "mother-of-millions" crept over the stone fence that inclosed it. Here, without board or writing, a hundred "signs" proclaimed the shoemaker's. The window-sash was filled with all that belongs to the art and mystery of cobbling, while in the seat below were crowded odds and ends in that confusion which is dear to the true worker, let proverbial philosophy say what it will. There were the lasts and awls, the heel-taps and leather parings, the hobnails and sprigs, the cobbler's-wax, and that mysterious half of a cocoa-nut

shell with the little bit of grease that never got more or less.

Here, then, aproned, and in shirt sleeves, sits Brother Dan'el. A face that we can recall as easily as if we had just left the shoemaker's shop—as entirely original as his opinions. We see it still; that round bullet-head with its thick hair, which would not be smoothed down over his forehead, but stood persistently on end in an unruly and altogether un-Methodistical fashion; that forehead, straight and narrow, seamed and furrowed with deep wrinkles; the bristling eye-brows, and under them the broad-rimmed spectacles, covering on one side a green patch (an accident in boyhood had hopelessly finished the work of that eye), while on the other side peered the surviving partner, generally half over the broad silver rim—a sharp, quick, busy eye, that looked as if it were perfectly aware that it had to do business for two, and meant to do it thoroughly; the short broad nose, “tip-tilted,” perhaps, but by no means “like the petal of a flower;” the long upper

tip, and then the little mouth pursed together as if it were always going to whistle, and lengthwise on each side ran the deep furrows draining into themselves the shallower rivulets and rills of wrinkles that crossed the face in every direction.

The old clock stood in the corner of the cobbler's shop, and was, with but one exception, the most precious bit of furniture that he possessed.

The little shelf of books was very dear, but Wesley's Works would have gone, "Notes" and "Sermons," and all, before the clock. Indeed, there was only one thing that would have had any chance beside it. That was an old green-baize covered Bible, with loose leaves; dear, as the book of precious promises from which every day Dan'el drew strength and peace and hope, it was dearer because on the fly-leaf, among many family names and sundry accounts and entries, came the writing in a large straggling hand: "My Mother's Bible, July, 1832." Away in the quiet little church-yard was a grave, carefully

tended, made beautiful with simple flowers, and at its head a stone that explained this date. Here rested John Quorm "of this parish," who died 1820. Here also slept Margaret Quorm, wife of the above, who departed this life July 16, 1832; and underneath this name was the text: "I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Little wonder that the Bible was dear.

But what could there be in a clock? It was an old-fashioned clock in a tall wooden case, that solemnly ticked in the corner—slowly and solemnly ticked the minutes through, duly "giving warning" five minutes before the hour, striking deliberately, as if it stayed to count each stroke, and then settling down for another solemn hour's work. Yet, solemn as it was, and much above all trifling, there was a strange little bit of humor on the very face of it. A round, chubby face with two round eyes was intended to represent the moon, and had been formerly connected with workings that marked the lunar changes and quarterings; but by some mishap

it had slipped down, and one eye now peeped out of the corner with a cunning look, that seemed to say, "You think me an old sober-sides who has not a bit of fun in him, but that's all you know about it." And one almost expected to see a sly wink half shut that cunning little eye.

But these things—its solemn ticking and its sly peeping—however noteworthy they may have been, could not explain how it came to have such a place in Dan'el's heart of hearts. This was his story:

Dan'el was about seventeen years of age when his father died. "Of course," said every body, "of course old Mrs. Quorm will leave the place now. Pity but what young Dan'el was a few years older." Old Mrs. Quorm's relatives had actually gone to the length of making arrangements for her removal. But it had never crossed Dan'el's mind; and when he heard of it he simply stared with the one little sharp eye, and asked, "Whatever for?" and looked so amazed, and asked it with such angry surprise, that the

relatives took a little longer time to think of it, in which time Daniel settled the matter in his own way.

He at once took upon his young shoulders all the care and toil of manhood. He never questioned how he should do, but just sat down in his father's place, and rose early and sat late, and worked away with a will that would have discovered the North-west Passage, much less sufficed to keep the old roof over the dear mother's head. It was a constant joy to him that she whom he loved so dearly was so dependent on his thrift and industry. The very tools caught the impulse of such a generous motive. The hammer never rang so merrily in the old man's time; even the tough leather and hard lapstone might have had a heart in them somewhere, and never did their part so well—so all Penwinnin declared.

One night Dan'el sat, long after every other worker in the village was fast asleep, busying that one little eye that seemed never to tire. As he bored, and stitched, and ham-

mered, his mind dwelt upon his father's death, and many thoughts began to stir that had often come and gone with no very visible result—thoughts of death and immortality, memories of words and events that had impressed him in his very childhood, and now woke up from their long slumber with strange force; how that he, too, must pass away, and whither should he go?

Suddenly the old clock in the corner took up the message with its slow and solemn ticking. In that still hour it kept repeating with measured beat, and strange monotony, its brief sentence—Forever—where? Forever—where? Forever—where? Without a pause for a moment, without a break, it ticked on its dreadful question. Every other sound was hushed, and in the lonely stillness the ticking clock seemed to become almost unbearably loud. It was troublesome, and Daniel hammered more vigorously; but the ticking only grew louder; the question was pressed home only the more closely. Distinct and incessant it repeated itself, Forever—

where? Forever—where? Dan'el's deepest feelings began to be stirred. The memory of his father's last words broke upon him: "Good-bye, Daniel, but not forever." And again, slow and solemn, the old clock took up its strain—Forever—where? Forever—where?" Daniel could bear it no longer. He rose, laid down his work, and resolved to stop this persistent messenger. He walked over to it, and opened the narrow door. More loudly the question began, "Forever," but before it could be finished Daniel put his finger on the pendulum. At once all was still, and he returned to his work.

But the silence was more impressive than the slow ticking, and from within himself a voice began to say some plain things.

"Dan'el," it whispered, "thou art a coward and a fool." "So I am," he cried aloud, as he flung down his work, and as the tears gathered in his eyes. "Stopping the clock won't stop the time. The moments are going all the same, whether I hear them or not. And am I going with them, forever—where?"

forever—where? No; I'll set it a-going again, for it does no good to stop it."

Bravely he set it off once more. But the work lay at his feet, and with clasped hands and head hung down he gave himself up to thoughts that impressed him so deeply: the thought of God, of his claims, of his goodness, of his righteousness, grew upon him; of sin, of its horribleness and its awful peril. All the sins of his life began to rise up before him, especially the one great sin of neglecting and forgetting God; and amid it all came every now and then that slow, solemn ticking: Forever—where? Forever—where? His distress became unbearable. He flung himself upon his knees, and cried, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Long he wrestled in earnest prayer; but all was in vain. No help, no light, no peace came. In despair he ceased to pray, and buried his face in his hands. "Forever—where? Forever—where?" rang again from the clock in that lonely silence.

What could he do? Goaded and driven

on by that dreadful message, whither could he fly? All he could do was to fall, as a poor helpless sinner, into the Saviour's arms. The tears fell faster as he flung himself helplessly on the stool, and groaned: "O Lord, a broken heart thou wilt not despise! Look at mine. Broken and crushed, have mercy upon me, and save me." That moment light dawned upon him. He rested upon Christ, his crucified Redeemer, and that was everything. Helpless and undone, he just simply clung to the cross of Christ, and there he found what the thousands of the redeemed have found there—pardon, and peace, and heaven. For his sins the Lord had died; for him that Life had been laid down. The clear light of the Holy Spirit, who is to come to testify of Jesus, lit up all the purpose of the cross, and revealed all the mercy of God in Christ. Daniel knelt, hushed in adoring gratitude. Again through the stillness came that message from the corner, welcomed now with strangely different feelings—Forever—where? Forever—where? From Daniel's

heart there burst the rapturous response: "Glory be to thee, O Lord! with thee forever! 'He that believeth hath everlasting life!'"

As he arose from his knees the old clock struck twelve. "The 'old things are passed away,'" he whispered, "and 'all things are become new.' Well may the old clock strike twelve and finish this strange night; ay, and that old life! A new day begins for me." And he left it in the darkness ticking on its solemn message: Forever—where? Forever—where?

Reader, hast thou heard the message? What is the answer? Time is hurrying you onward day after day, hour after hour. Forever—where? is the cry of the moments to you. Every moment is a step further on to the great eternity. Is it bearing you upward, toward the sunny distance of the everlasting light? Or are you hastening always downward, moment after moment, toward the everlasting darkness?

For you, too, Jesus Christ has laid down his life, the just for the unjust. The work of your salvation is done so far that it only waits for your acceptance. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Will you come now?

Why add another day to the many that are lost? Why go further on the road that must end in death? It is easier to turn to-day than it will ever be. And to-morrow for you may never come.

This very hour Jesus stands tenderly inviting you: "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

[From *Dan'el Quorm and His Religious Notions.*]

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