THE YOUNG MUSICIAN AND HIS SICK MOTHER.

The following passage in the life of an English composer, will thrill the heart of many a mother who will read it here, no doubt, for the first time:

"Little Pierre sat humming by the bedside of his sick mother. There was no bread in the closet, and for the whole day he had not tasted food. Yet, he sat humming, to keep up his spirits. Still, at times, he thought of his lonchness and hunger, and he could scarcely keep the tears from his eyes, for he knew nothing would be so grateful to his poor invalid mother, as a good sweet orange, and yet he had not a penny in the world. This little song he was singing was his own, one he composed with air and words: for the child was a genius, and a fervent worshipper at the shrine of music. As the tears would roll down his cheeks, and his voice would falter at the sad, sad thoughts, he did not dare to let his mother see, but, hastily rising, hurried to the window, and there watched a man putting up a great bill with yellow letters, announcing that Madame M:, then a favorite cantatrice, would sing that night at the Temple. "Oh, if I only could go," thought little Pierre; and then pausing a moment he clasped his hands; his eyes lighted with unwonted fire; and running to the little stand he smoothed down his yellow curls, and taking from his little box some old stained paper, gave one eager glance at his mother, who slept, and ran speedily from the house. "Who did you say is waiting for me?" said Madame M., to her servant 'I am already worn out with company.' It is only a very pretty little boy with yellow curls, who if he can only see you, he is sure you will not be sorry, and he will not keep you a moment." "Oh, well, let him come,' said the beautiful singer, with a smile, 'I can never refuse children.' Little Pierre came in, his hat under his arm, and in his hand a little roll of paper. With a manliness unusual for a child, he walked straight to Madame M, and bowing said, "I came to see you because my mother is very sick, and we are too poor to get food and medicine. I thought that perhaps if you would sing only my little song at some of your concerts, 'maybe some publisher would buy it for a small sum, and so I could get food and medicine for my mother.' The beautiful woman rose from her seat, very tall and stately she was; she took the little roll from his hand, and lightly hummed the air. 'Did you compose it?' she asked you a child? And the words? Wonderful little genius! Would you like to come to my concert?' she asked after a few moments of thought. 'Oh yes;' and the boy's blue eyes grew liquid with happiness; 'but I could not leave my mother.' 'I will send somebody to take care of your mother for the evening, and here is a crown with which do you go and get food and medicine. Here is also one of my tickets; come to-night; that will admit you to a seat near me; my good little fellow, your mother has a treasure in you.' Almost beside himself with joy, Pierre bought some oranges, and many a little luxury besides, and carried them home to the poor invalid, telling her, not without tears, of his good fortune.

Never in his life had Pierre been in such a grand place. The music, clashing and rolling, the myriad of lights, the beauty, the flashing of diamonds and rustling of silks, bewildered his eyes and brain. At last she came, and the child sat with his glance rivetted upon her glorious face. Could he believe that the grand lady, all blazing with jewels, and who everybody seemed to worship, would really sing his little song? Breathless he waited; the band, the whole band, struck up a little plaintive melody: he knew it, and clapped his hands for joy. And, oh how she sung it! it was so simple, so mournful, so soul-subduing; many a bright eye dimmed with tears, and naught could be heard but the touching words of that little song, oh, so touching! Pierre walked home as if he were moving on the air. What cared he for money now? The greatest prima donna in all Europe had sung his little song, and thousands had wept at his grief. The next day he was frightened at a visit from Madame M. She laid her hand on his yellow curls, and turning to the sick woman, said, 'Your little boy, madam, has brought you a fortune. I was offered this morning, by the best publisher in London, three hundred pounds for his little song; and after he has realized a certain amount for the sale, little Pierre, here, is to share the profits Madame, thank God that your son has a gift from Heaven.' The noble-hearted singer and the poor woman wept together. As to Pierre, always mindful of Him who watches over the tired and tempted, he knelt down by his mother's bedside, and uttered a simple but eloquent prayer, asking God's blessing on the kind lady who had deigned to notice their affliction. And the memory of that prayer made the singer even more tender-hearted; and she who was the idol of England's nobility, like the worlds great Master, went about doing good. And in her early happy death, when the grave damps gathered over her brow, and her eyes grew dim, he who stood by her bed, his bright face clothed in the mourning of sighs and tears, and smoothed her pillow, and lightened her last moments by his undying affection, was the little Pierre of former days—now rich, accomplished, and the most talented composer of the day. All honour to those great hearts who, from their high stations, send down bounty unto the widow and the fatherless child!"

LEAP YEAR—THE LADIES.

Leap year has come again, when, by long-established customs, ladies are privileged to "pop the question." Crusty old bachelors go about in terror, giving a wide berth to every pretty girl they meet, and blessing Heaven for the invention of hoops, which prevents the fair creatures seizing them *vi et armis*. Sweet little creatures, for whom coy swains have long sighed in vain, pluck up courage, and, by a few gentle hints, which are no longer unladylike, bring the modest youths to the point. Manœuvering mammas, thanking their stars that leap year comes once every four years, but secretly wishing also that it came every year, look for a fine harvest out of bashful lovers, and hurry their daughters "into society," that they may take advantage of the blessed time. Even papas, rubbing their hands in glee, rejoice over the privileges of leap year, as they calculate the annual cost of their daughters and the cent. per cent. they could make out of the money if saved. Lucky leap year! Propitious leap year! The inventor of the happy custom ought to have a statue raised to him by the ladies. Or, if the inventor was a woman—for we doubt our sex having sagacity enough for such a splendid *coup de main*——they should honor her by a leap year festival, as the ancients honored Ceres.—*Philadelphia Ledger.*

A SOAP MINE.—Sonora (California) papers mention the discovery of a "soap mine" in Table Mountain. The writers in the papers have seen and handled, and washed with the article. They solemnly assure the public that there is no lie or hoax about it. The *Union Democrat* remarks:

"Mr. Dinsmore, of the Kennebec Mining Company, near Vallecita, has furnished us with several curious specimens of a deposit taken out of his shaft, so nearly resembling soap, that it is difficult to distinguish it from the genuine manufactured article. The cakes are of a brownish hue, and, from practical test, we find they answer all the purposes of bodily ablution, quite as well as any soap. The vein is about six inches in thickness, and forms a distinct stratum between what is called the pipe clay, some fifteen feet from the surface. The article is destitute of both taste and smell."

A sea captain, relating the fact that he had a daughter who could eat a pound of cheese at a sitting, a wag thought it not at all strange that a *skipper's* child should be fond of that article.

Mr. A. Bronson, of Meadville, Pa., says, from fifteen years' experience, he finds that Indian meal poultice, covered with young hyson tea, softened with hot water, and laid over burns or frozen flesh, as hot as can be borne, will relieve the pain in five minutes.

SWITZERLAND.

Switzerland is, in many respects, a peculiar country; the Federation does barely exceed that of those Lower Colonies; the capital, Geneva has an area about that of this city; nevertheless, it has frequently played an important part in the history of Europe, having, like Venice, derived more weight from the energy and dauntless spirit of its people that from its territorial or mineral resources.

When, in 1838, France demanded the expulsion of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, the Swiss promptly refused; and when Louis Philip threatened to march an army into their territory, the heights of the Jura, from Neufchatel Southward were speedily occupied by undaunted mountaineers; *but*, France did *not* insist, and the refugee continued to receive the protection of this gallant people.

The only weakness of the Swiss Federation lies in divisions and jealousies between State and State—which, by the way, is a bane common to all Federal Governments—a fact sufficiently perceptible in the instance of the United States, but, there a single—the smallest—State would absorb the whole Swiss Republic; and, again, it is in the smaller, more minutely divided and subdivided country, that diversities of sentiment and policy become most numerous, and collects of opinion more fierce and dangerous to the integrity of the Union.

The Swiss Cantons vary from each other very materially in their political constitution. The Catholic Cantons differ from the Protestant, and the Protestant, again, one from another. Some are single and double Cantons; in some democracy is qualified, in others it is absolute. In one or two the aristocratic element is still perceptible, though nearly destroyed, whilst one Canton (Neufchatel) presents the anomaly of forming part of a Republican Federation, yet owing a sort of allegiance to a Monarchial Government (Prussia). Again, these political differences, of themselves, one might naturally suppose, sufficient to paralyze anything like unity of action, are frequently rendered more violent and complicated by religious dissensions, which, more than once in the present century, have been carried out in sanguinary civil wars. The truth is that, in Switzerland, as in the United States, the Liberal or Radical party—the most numerous party—has never hesitated to carry into political contests an intolerant hatred of the Church, and, and as a natural consequence, the Roman Catholic Ministry have never hesitated, on occasion, to have recourse to arms when out-numbered by votes. Nevertheless, when their perfect independence as a Federal Republic has at any time, or by any foreign power, been threatened, this singularly brave and hardy people have never hesitated to flock around their national standard, and show a united and bold front to the threatening or actually invading foe With patriotism and the undying love of liberty are sentiments paramount and above all others.—*Halifax Sun.*

SWEDEN.—We learn from a good source (says *Nuremburg Correspondent*) that, besides the treaty of Nov. 21, there are in existence special conventions between Sweden and Bowers and Powers. These acts were prepared during the stay of General Canrobert at Stockholm. They remain still to be ratified, and will not be published unless hostilities against Russia should continue in the spring. These conventions will place Sweden in an entirely new attitude to Russia, and will have for their effect much more than to concede depots and stations to the allied fleets.

Further European Items.

LONDON, Jan. 8th.—Lord Panmure has this day received a despatch of which the following is a copy, addressed to his lordship by Gen. Sir William Codrington, K. C. B.:

"Sebastopol, Dec. 25th. My Lord—Notwithstanding the recent severe weather, the thermometer a few nights ago having fallen nearly to zero, the general state of health of the army has continued good. The roads are in fair working order, and though the efficiency of the locomotive engines was impaired by the frost, the damage has been made good.

"The final operations on the docks have been somewhat delayed on our side by the influx of water and the working of pumps.

"The firing on the northern side of the harbour continues and it is at times heavy, but the casualties, I am happy to say, are few.

"There has been no movement of important on the part of the enemy, in our neighbourhood of late.

"A detatchment of French troops surprised a Cossack post near Kilon, a few days ago killing several men and taking the rest prisoners.

"The general drill of the army makes good progress.

BALTIC PREPARATIONS.—The naval authorities of Cherbourg have been ordered to arm three screw liners and three sailing frigates, which are to be ready for the opening out of the campaign of the Baltic in April next. In addition to these ships are to be fitted out with all possible despatch. Cherbourg is to arm the war screw transport Tonnere of 1200 tons.

The vessel of the Iceland station, and the five bomb vessels and the twelve steam gunboats which have returned from the last campaign in the Baltic, are to be part of the formidable expedition which is to operate in that Sea next spring.

The news from Sweden states, that General Block, minister of war in Norway, and Commander in Chief of the army, has been directed to organize the Norwegian troops in concert with the head of the war departement at Stockholm.

The Swedish Journal reports, under date of Stockholm, Dec. 21. "Activity unexampled reigns in every manufactory for producing articles necessary to the equipment of an army."

The Colonels of all the regiments received orders to supply their troops with everything necessary to prepare them for marching at the first signal.

The order was given secretly, but it was in its nature impossible of concealment. All leaves of absence are refused to officers.

Everybody here believes, that in case the Allies should open the war with vigour in the Baltic next spring, our Govenment will feel itself compelled to take an active part therein.

Vienna, Jan. 4th—The amnesty which has been granted to the Poles includes some foreigners, among whom are ten Germans and three Frenchmen. Colonel DeManteuffel had an audience of the Emperor yesterday. The chances of an understanding between Prussia and Austria appear to be increasing.

THE CAVALRY AFFAIRS AT KERTCH.—The "Russian victory in the Crimea" appears to have been very small indeed. The Turkish cavalry defeated was only a foraging party of sixty five men, who were surprised and surrounded by a hundred-fold their number of Russians. Capt. Sherwood, their English officer, ordered a retreat, but they were obliged to cut their way through the masses of the enemy. The Turkish soldiers threw themselves on their enemies and fought with heroism. Capt. Sherwood, who was conspicuous by his English uniform, fell one of the first. His death did not check the ardor of the soldiers, who fought with renewed fury. Twenty-five succeeded in cutting their way throuh and so escaped. The remaining forty horsemen, officers and soldiers either died on the battle-field, or were taken prisoners

The "American Almanack" gives the following as the aggregate population of the world:

Africa	100,000,000
America	57,706,882
Asia	929,000,000
Australia	1,445,000
Europe	263,517,521
Polynesia	1,500,000
Total	1,050,169,403

A characteristic anecdote is told of one of the Turkish soldiers who was the first to set foot inside the battery at Ingour. Perceiving a Russian colonel lying dead upon the ground he plucked off his glove and appropriated a valuable diamond ring which was upon his finger. Knowing, however, that it would be impossible very long to keep secretly the possession of so valuable a prize, he showed his Usbashi, or captain, his treasure, and requested permission to keep it. The Usbashi told the man that he was quite right to bring the prize to him, and that henceforward it should be transferred to the finger of the said Usbashi. The soldier, not satisfied with this arrangement, referred the matter to the Bimbashi, or Major, who said that both he and the Usbashi were highly culpable in daring to retain the ring from their superior officer, and that he would therefore relieve them of the subject of dispute. From the Bimbashi the soldier went to the Kaima Kama, or Lieut Colonel, who at once followed the example of his inferiors, and took possession of the ring. The soldier still persevered, however, and went to the Meer Ali (Colonel), who determined that he was the rightful possessor of the ring by virtue of his rank, and dismissed the rival claimants from his presence in the most summary manner. Next day a French officer attached to the Staff of Omer Pacha observed a private soldier prowling near the tent of the Commander in Chief. The story of the ring was at once retailed by its original possessor to this gentleman, who laid the matter before his highness, and the man had not only the satisfaction of regaining possession of his property, but of knowing that those who had attempted successively to deprive him of it had been severely reprimanded for their conduct.

SONNET

'Tis better far an active life to live,
Than to let indolence the soul encrust;
Use keeps things bright, inaction causes rust,
They seldom aught attain who never strive,
Oh! never let us our own hearts deceive
But nobly let's fulfil our highest trust—
Cast prejudice aside and be more just;
Then much of lasting good we should achieve,
Come let us strive by counsel or by song,
To point the way by which man may attain
A brighter state of being; then ere long
Earth what it lost of Eden would regain,
A righteous cause will always stand the test;
Then let us toil in hope and do our best.

—JOHN BOOKER.