

THE GRANDMOTHER

("Dors-tu? mère de notre mère.")

[III., 1823.]

"To die--to sleep."--SHAKESPEARE.

Still asleep! We have been since the noon thus alone.

Oh, the hours we have ceased to number!

Wake, grandmother!--speechless say why thou art grown.

Then, thy lips are so cold!--the Madonna of stone

Is like thee in thy holy slumber.

We have watched thee in sleep, we have watched thee at prayer,

But what can now betide thee?

Like thy hours of repose all thy orisons were,

And thy lips would still murmur a blessing whene'er

Thy children stood beside thee.

Now thine eye is unclosed, and thy forehead is bent

O'er the hearth, where ashes smoulder;

And behold, the watch-lamp will be speedily spent.

Art thou vexed? have we done aught amiss? Oh, relent!

But--parent, thy hands grow colder!

Say, with ours wilt thou let us rekindle in thine

The glow that has departed?
Wilt thou sing us some song of the days of lang syne?
Wilt thou tell us some tale, from those volumes divine,
Of the brave and noble-hearted?

Of the dragon who, crouching in forest green glen,
Lies in wait for the unwary--
Of the maid who was freed by her knight from the den
Of the ogre, whose club was uplifted, but then
Turned aside by the wand of a fairy?
Wilt thou teach us spell-words that protect from all harm,
And thoughts of evil banish?
What goblins the sign of the cross may disarm?
What saint it is good to invoke? and what charm
Can make the demon vanish?

Or unfold to our gaze thy most wonderful book,
So feared by hell and Satan;
At its hermits and martyrs in gold let us look,
At the virgins, and bishops with pastoral crook,
And the hymns and the prayers in Latin.
Oft with legends of angels, who watch o'er the young,
Thy voice was wont to gladden;
Have thy lips yet no language--no wisdom thy tongue?
Oh, see! the light wavers, and sinking, bath flung
On the wall forms that sadden.

Wake! awake! evil spirits perhaps may presume
 To haunt thy holy dwelling;
Pale ghosts are, perhaps, stealing into the room--
Oh, would that the lamp were relit! with the gloom
 These fearful thoughts dispelling.
Thou hast told us our parents lie sleeping beneath
 The grass, in a churchyard lonely:
Now, thine eyes have no motion, thy mouth has no breath,
And thy limbs are all rigid! Oh, say, Is this death,
 Or thy prayer or thy slumber only?

ENVOY.

Sad vigil they kept by that grandmother's chair,
 Kind angels hovered o'er them--
And the dead-bell was tolled in the hamlet--and there,
On the following eve, knelt that innocent pair,
 With the missal-book before them.

"FATHER PROUT" (FRANK S. MAHONY).