

PEOPLE'S MAGAZINE,

AND WEEKLY JOURNAL.

Vol. I.

MONTREAL, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1847.

No. 20

THE CHEERFUL GIVER.

BY MRS. SIGOURNEY.

"God loveth a cheerful giver."

"What shall I render thee, Father supreme,
For thy rich gifts, and thine the best of all?"
Said a young mother, as she fondly watched
Her sleeping babe.

There was an answering voice,
That night in dreams. "Thou hast a little bud
Wrapt in thy breast, and fed with dews of love.
Give me that bud. 'Twill be a flower in heaven."
But there was silence. Yea, a hush so deep,
Breathless and terror-stricken, that the lip
Blanched in its trance. "Thou hast a little harp,
How sweetly would it swell the angels' song!
Give me that harp." There burst a shuddering sob,
As if the bosom by some hidden sword
Was cleft in twain.

Morn came. A blight had found
The crimson velvet of the unfolding bud,
The harp-strings ran a thrilling strain and broke,
And that young mother lay upon the earth
In childless agony.

Again the voice
That stirred her vision. "He who asked of thee,
Loveth a cheerful giver." So she raised
Her gushing eye, and ere the tear-drop dried
Upon its fringes, smiled. Doubt not that smile,
Like Abraham's faith, was counted righteousness.

"A TIME TO DANCE."

A worthy clergyman, who had been suspected of having improperly interfered in influencing some of the young people under his pastoral charge to absent themselves from a ball that took place in the parish, received, in consequence, the following anonymous note:—

"SIR,—Obey the voice of Scripture. Take the following for your text, and contradict it. Show in what consists the evil of that innocent amusement of dancing—'A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.'—Eccles. iii. 4. A TRUE CHRISTIAN, BUT NO HYPOCRITE."

The minister wrote the following admirable reply, which he inserted in a periodical publication:—

MY DEAR SIR, (OR MADAM).—Your request that I would preach from Eccles. iii. 4, I cannot comply with at present, since there are some Christian duties more important than dancing, which a part of my people seemed disposed to neglect. Whenever I perceive, however, that the duty of dancing is too much neglected, I shall not fail to raise a warning voice against so dangerous an omission. In the mean time, there are certain difficulties in the text which you recommend to my notice, the solution of which I should receive with gratitude from "a true Christian."

My first difficulty respects the *time* for dancing; for although the text declares that there is a *time* to dance, yet *when* that *time* is, it does not determine. Now, this point I wish to ascertain exactly, before I preach upon the subject; for it would be as criminal, I conclude, to dance at the wrong time, as to neglect to dance at the right time. I have been able to satisfy myself, in some particulars, when it is *not* "a time to dance." We shall agree, I presume, that on Sabbath day, or at a funeral, or during the prevalence of a pestilence, or the rocking of an earthquake, or the roaring of a thunder-storm, it would be no time to dance. If we were condemned to die, and were wait-

ing in prison the day of execution, this would be no time for dancing; and if our feet stood on a slippery place beside a precipice, we should not dare to dance. But, suppose the very day to be ascertained—is the whole day, or only a part, to be devoted to this amusement? and if a part of the day only, then which part is "the time to dance?" From the notorious evil effects of "night meetings," in all ages, both upon morals and health, no one will pretend that the evening is "the time to dance;" and perhaps it may be immaterial which portion of the daylight is devoted to that innocent amusement. But allowing the *time* to be ascertained, there is still an obscurity in the text. Is it a *command* to dance, or only a *permission*? Or is it merely a declaration of the fact, that as men are constituted, there is a time, when all the events alluded to in the text do in the providence of God come to pass? If the text be a *command*, is it of universal obligation? and must "old men and maidens, young men and children," dance obedience? If a *permission*, does it not imply a permission also to *refrain* from dancing if any were so disposed? Or if the text be merely a declaration that there is a time when men do dance, as there is a time when they die, then I might as well be *requested* to take the first eight verses of the chapter, and show in what consists the evil of those innocent practices of hating, and making war, and killing men, for which it seems there is "a time," as well as for dancing. There is still another difficulty in the text, which just now occurs to me. What *kind* of dancing does the text intend? for it is certainly a matter of no small consequence to "a true Christian" to dance in a Scriptural way as well as at the Scriptural time. Now, to avoid mistakes on a point of such importance, I have consulted every passage in the Bible which speaks of dancing; the most important of which, permit me to submit to your inspection.

"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her, with timbrels and with dances." Exod. xv. 20. This was on account of the overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

"The daughter of Jephthah came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances." Judges xi. 34. This also was on account of a victory over the enemies of Israel.

"The yearly feast in Shiloh was a feast unto the Lord, in which the daughters of Shiloh went forth in dances." Judges xxi. 21. This was done as an act of religious worship.

"And David danced before the Lord with all his might." But the irreligious Michal "came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovered himself." 2 Sam. vi. 14, 20.

Dancing, it seems, *was a sacred rite*, and was usually performed by women. At that day, it was perverted from its sacred use by none but "vain fellows" destitute of shame. David vindicates himself from her irony, by saying, "It was before the Lord;" admitting, that had this *not* been the case, her rebuke would have been merited.

On account of the victory of Saul and David over the Philistines, "the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing." 1 Sam. xviii. 6.

"Let them praise his name in the dance." Psalm cxlix. 3. "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing." Psalm xxx. 11. The deliverance here spoken of was a recovery from sickness, and the dancing an expression of religious gratitude and joy.

"As soon as he came nigh unto the camp, he saw the calf and the dancing." Exod. xxxii. 19. From this it appears that dancing was a part also of idol worship.

"O virgin of Israel, thou shalt again be adorned with thy