

Good Cheer.

BY HUBERT H. BROWN.

"O DEAR! O dear! 'tis the fall o' the year!"
Piped the robin, one autumn morn,
A sitting in shadow down in the meadow,
Where the harvesters pulled their corn.
And he piped it over and over again,
Till the hearts of the field-folk echoed the strain:

"O the snow and the blow! Old Winter, I know,
May clutch us as any day;
The stubble they're mowing, the golden-rod's going,
And everything's old and gray;
The last daisy faints at meeting Jack Frost,
And the primrose's bright yellow lantern is lost."

Then up the sun a sparrow began
To twitter and chirp and sing;
"Ah, sweet! O how sweet such a bright day
to greet!
Old Autumn's as merry as Spring;
Red leaves in his fingers and great drifts of gold
Under his footsteps so lusty and bold.

"Chip, chip, a-chee-chee! there are bright things to see,
If the roses and daisies have fled!
The sun is still smiling, all sorrow beguiling,
And nothing is really dead;
The flowers will come back, and nobody's undone,
As you'll see if you'll only keep in the sun."

Then, merry and gay as a holiday
That wakes in the summer with bees,
A great chorus started, clear, strong, and whole-hearted—
Grasshoppers, crickets, and chickadees:
"All seasons are good, and have gifts to be won,
As you'll see if you only keep in the sun."

The Story of a Hymn-Book.*

CHAPTER I.

A LEAF FROM GILBERT GUEHLING'S DIARY.

NOVEMBER 3rd.—A month to-day my mother died. It is three weeks since I followed her to the grave. Nay, not her; my mother's bright, saintly spirit has known nothing of the darkness of the grave. Say, rather, three weeks since I followed the mortal remains of dear mother to their temporary resting-place; for even the precious dust shall be raised and clothed with glory and beauty.

Dear mother! Only fifty-four, and yet a widow thirty years. How true to her husband and to her child! It was a sad hour that October afternoon when I saw my mother's coffin laid beside the dust of my father and my good old grandfather. Now I have no one of my mother's family left, except my Uncle Clement, at The Hawthorns, my childhood's home. How unspeakably dear is the old farmhouse to me! It was there I was born; it was there my happy childhood was spent. How is it that, in looking back upon those early times, all appears brilliant, uninterrupted sunshine? Memory takes no note of winter nights or cloudy days. There must have been seasons of gloom and sorrow even in boyhood's golden age; but only the memory of what was sweet, and bright, and blessed, remains. Mine was a happy boyhood, though I lost my father ere I knew him. But, then, I had such a mother! Had, shall I say? Nay, have, for I hope my father will!

It has been hard work to go through her books and papers, and private treasures. Everything seemed so much a part of her, and brought with it so many memories. My father's letters—those I never saw before. (But I know my father now, as I never know him, or thought to know him. Locks of hair, faded ribbons, letters yellow with years, and the pale ink, almost too faint for the words written so long ago to be read now.)

"Class-tickets"—what a series of them! My mother received her first when she was only eleven years old. And she never missed one to the day of her death. They're all here—for fifty-three years!

My mother's Bible—bearing tokens of

constant use, despite all her care. How some pages seem to fall open naturally, as if often counted! And the texts from which she heard sermons all neatly marked with the preacher's name and the date. And then her Hymn-book. Next to her Bible, the most precious of all her treasures; her daily companion, the medium of her prayers and praises, her psalter and liturgy.

On these two books her eyes rested the very day she died; they were to her like the rod and the staff of the Shepherd as she passed through the valley.

The sight of all these precious—may I not say sacred—relics has brought up all my life before me. These dumb memorials seem to have found a voice. As I sit here at my desk, in my quiet room, they speak to me, and rehearse the story of the past.

Ah, dear old Hymn-book! Is not that a salt water stain on the once bright red morocco of your cover? And your pages—they have been wet, too, with ocean brine and mother's tears. And ah, here! these pages, "For Believer Fighting," is not that the stain of blood?

Old Hymn-book, if you could speak, what tales you might tell! Suppose I let you tell your story. With those letters and notes of my mother's, and the recollections that come crowding upon me as I sit at this bureau where she so often sat, it would be no very hard task to find material for a life story.

How many figures must find a place in the canvas! And how many and what varied scenes! Strange that a single and ordinary life should embrace such diversified experiences! The English village and the mighty prairie, and the streets of London and the broad Atlantic, the college hall and the California gambling-hell, the shipwreck and the battle-field—how strange that my mother's Hymn-book should have known something of all these, and more!

I will mend my pen and trim my lamp, and lay out a clean fair sheet upon my blotting-pad, and while the narrative the old book may unfold. Stay a moment, another coal on the fire, and the rattling window fastened!

There, dear old friend of my mother and her sorrowing son, now I am ready. Speak!

CHAPTER II.

THE BOOK'S STORY BEGINS.

I AM not going to begin my story according to the old-time example of autobiographers, who think it necessary to go back to the very earliest recollections, and to repeat the traditions of their elders as to the unique infancy and remarkable childhood of themselves, the autobiographers in question. I shall not take you back to the dreadful days of my "manufacture," when from so much "raw material" I was developed or evolved (is not that the correct modern word?), and become transformed, by virtue of various processes of printing, folding, pressing, and binding, from cold blank paper and dull leather into that most wonderful of human productions—a book.

But you may, perhaps, wish to know something of my personal appearance. I trust I am not vain, but I am nevertheless glad that I was strongly and respectably clothed when I was sent into the world, or I should never have entered the circles in which I have moved, or have survived the experiences through which I have passed.

Well, then, I am a Methodist Hymn-book. I think my style and title are duly registered in that Registry-Office-General of bookdom, Stationer's Hall, as "A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists. By the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., sometime Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, London, Published by John Mason, City Road." My title-page bears no date, but I am able to tell you I was "published" (I think that is the word) in 1837.

In form and fashion I am not nearly so elegant as those younger members of my family with whom I sometimes come in contact in these days.

I am not thin and genteel, nor do I wear gold and costly apparel; and therein I am surely the more conformable to the strict and simple rule of old-fashioned Methodism. I am told that my young kinsfolk

of this modern age are some of them dressed in watered silk and purple velvet, to say nothing of ivory caskets and golden clasps!

I am short and thick, very much like a little stout man among the slim and tall. The edges of my leaves are gilded, but I know nothing of the vanities of red borders, or covers embossed with gold.

But after all, it is the character and not the coat that makes the man—"the rank is but the guinea stamp, a man's a man for a' that." So with the book, it is not its dress or adornments, but its self which is either beautiful and valuable, or ugly and worthless.

For all, that however, I think the "Collection of Hymns" is worthy of the most durable and handsome covering; and next to the precious Bible—from which holy book, indeed, all I possess of grace or beauty is derived—I would rather be a Wesleyan Hymn-book than aught beside. Even my excellent cousins, "Pilgrim's Progress," "The Saint's Rest," "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," and the rest of them, are not so frequently and universally privileged to comfort and instruct Christian people, or to aid and express the devotion of pious souls. Yes, I would rather be a Hymn-book than any other book but a Bible. My beloved brethren of the Hymnal family, between whom and myself the utmost harmony and unity exist, share with me in privileges and opportunities that other books can hardly aspire to. We are the dearest friends of childhood, and the close companions of youth. The soldier carries us in his knapsack, the sailor keeps us in his chest. The factory girl cons our pages as we lie open upon her loom, and the miller finds us brighter than his "safety lamp" amid the murky gloom of the pit. Our melodies blend with marriage chimes, our laments and hopes mingle with dirge and knell. Vast congregations roll forth our poetry in mighty volumes of harmonious praise, or little companies of earnest souls, in rude cottages and thatched chapels, feebly and unmelodiously chant our verse. Dying fingers lovingly press our pages, and dying saints take our music with them to the very gates of heaven, until, stepping over the threshold, they exchange it for the "new song."

I sometimes feel as if good Charles Wesley's aspiration had been more than literally realized. His single tongue seemed to him all insufficient to express the overflowing emotions of his soul,—and that seraphic and melodious tongue has long since been silent in the dust,—but how many thousand tongues have sung, and continue to sing, in Charles Wesley's own words, the

"Great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!"

But to come back to my own individual reminiscences. You see how garrulous is old age; and though my years have not yet reached half a century, I am, I feel, growing old. Am I not superannuated? My younger kinsman, "Wesley's Hymns and New Supplement," are now carrying on the sweet strain of song I and my contemporaries delighted to raise. But my good owner and friend, Gilbert Guehling,—and I have known him from a baby,—has not put me away on the shelf. No, I am the daily companion of his hours of devotion; and I think he loves me for my own as well as for his mother's sake. And as I see him sitting at his desk, with his diary before him, reviewing all the way the Lord has led him, I think I can help to complete the story he is endeavouring to pen.

Nearly forty years ago I first left the shelves of the warehouse, the "book-room," to enter upon my public career. More than thirty-three years since I came to Gilbert's grandfather's house at Oakshade. Gilbert's mother was then a fair Christian maiden, and I came to Oakshade as a present for her on her twenty-first birthday. My dear mistress,—of whose life-history I have known so much, and in whose joys and sorrows I have had a constant share,—I shall never know the pressure of her gentle fingers again, nor feel the warm tear drop from her eye upon my page! They took me from her side when they smoothed her hands across her

quiet breast, and the last words she spoke were those on my 663d page (Hymn 734)

"O what are all my sufferings here,
If, Lord, thou count me meet
With that enraptured heart to appear,
And worship at Thy feet!"

"Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,
Take life or friends away;
I come to find them all again
In that eternal day."

Gilbert will prize his mother's Hymn book for his mother's sake, but I am glad to know he will prize it for his own sake. He is no stranger to the contents of my pages. Indeed, I have been almost as much with him as with his mother. I have known him through all the periods of life, from infancy to manhood. I have been the companion of his Christian pilgrimage through its various stages of experience common to believers, whether Rejoicing, Fighting, Praying, Watching, Working, Suffering, or Seeking for full Redemption. Our histories are very much intertwined, and between my experiences and his reminiscences we may together be able to make a complete record. It shall be a joint production. What shall it be called? The Story of a Hymn book? No, let the title be a double one, as the work and interests are mutual.

(To be continued.)

THE PICTURE "DEVELOPED."

I KNOW a boy who has a camera and takes pictures. He took me into his dark-room the other day to show me how to develop a plate. He had been down to the Battery, in New York, that afternoon; it is not a battery at all now, being a little park on the tip end of Manhattan Island—and had "snapped" a picture. He did not tell me what it was going to be, and all I had to do was to wait.

First he poured clean water into a tray, and then by the dim light of a red lantern took a glass plate out of his camera. "The picture is on that," he said, as he slid it into the water tray. May be the picture was there; but what was a pane of glass coated on one side with some stuff that looked like cream. While the plate soaked, my little photographer was busy with his bottle and measure, mixing a glassful of clear liquid that he called his "developer."

"Now, watch," he warned me, as he lifted the plate from its bath, and placing it in an empty tray, pouring the developer upon its blank, creamy surface. I watched, no change yet. He was watching the tray intently, rocking the tray gently. Look! there are spots in the cream. The upper part of the plate is darkening "sky," says the operator. The shade creeps over the lower corners. "Water," he mutters. What is this? The creamy remnant in the central field is taking form. Slender lines of white transverse the dark sky. A mass of white becomes a vessel with spars and rigging, two massive stacks, four towering masts. The smoke pours from her chimneys, a torrent of foam leaps from her prow and sweeps behind her in a majestic avenue. The blank cream plate has developed into a perfect picture of an Atlantic steamship. The picture was all on the plate when we went into the dark room, but it took the developer to bring it out.

I know a young man who was remarkable for his good looks and genial manners. He was one of those fellows whom every one likes. So far as his friends could see, his life was as clear as that creamy plate of my friend, the picture man. But the young man is in Canada now, and it is said that he wakes up in the middle of the night shivering with fear that the police have caught him at last. "That can't be the same young man," you say. Ah, but it is the very same, only he has been in the "developer." Smooth as he seemed, he had been exposed to temptation in his boyhood, and got in the habit of being too quite honest. Nobody knew it. But one day he was in a "dark room," with a terrible temptation and the character which he had been forming flashed out. He stole one hundred thousand dollars, and fled. At some time or other, circumstances will bring to light the principles you now live by. Be sure that the picture of your own character comes out well.

* This story was first told in book form from the Methodist Book Concern, Toronto.