

The Song of the Golden-Rod.

Oh, not in the morning of April or May,
When the young light lies faint on the sod,
And the wind-flower blooms for the half of a day—
Not then comes the Golden-rod.

But when the bright year has grown vivid
and bold
With its utmost of beauty and strength,
Then it leaps into life, and its banners unfold
Along all the land's green length.

It is born in the glow of a great, high noon,
It is wrought of a bit of the sun;
Its being is set to a golden tune
In a golden summer begun.

No hill is too high for its resolute foot,
No meadow too bare or too low;
It asks but the space of its fearless root,
And the right to be glad and to grow.

It delights in the loneliest waste of the moor,
And mocks at the rain and the gust.
It belongs to the people. It blooms for the poor,
It thrives in the roadside dust.

It endures though September wax chill and unkind;
It laughs on the brink of the crag;
Nor blanches when forests turn white in the wind;
Though dying, it holds up its flag!

Its bloom knows no stint, its gold no alloy,
And we claim it forever as ours;
God's symbol of freedom and world-wide joy—
America's flower of flowers!
—St. Nicholas.

The Story of a Hymn-Book.

CHAPTER III.

THE ADVENT OF THE HYMN-BOOK AT OAKSHADE.

To go back to that first evening when I was introduced to the excellent family at Oakshade. I have still a dim recollection of being packed and forwarded in the carrier's van to Winton, the circuit town. I remember how glad I was to see daylight again, as the book-parcel was opened in the study of the good minister, Mr. Richmond. Books were not so plentiful then, and but for Methodist preachers they would not have been as accessible as they were. The village of Oakshade had no book-seller; no village library, no news-vender. The squire and the parson had, perhaps, their newspaper, and what with the stamp duty, they had to pay for it too. The era of illustrated periodicals and penny dailies had not then dawned upon the world.

No wonder, then, that the preacher's book-parcel was opened with interest, and that the visit of the good man to village and hamlet, perhaps with the new literature in his saddle-bags, were eagerly anticipated.

Together with "the Magazine" and some other books and pamphlets, I was made up into a small parcel to be delivered at Oakshade next time Mr. Richmond should be appointed there, which opportunity occurred the very next day.

Wednesday was market day at Winton, and on the evening of the monthly service at Oakshade, the preacher returned with the farmer from market. Mr. Wilmot, the occupant of The Hawthorns, was a man of about forty-five years of age, robust and ruddy, the very type of an English yeoman. It was growing dusk in the afternoon of an autumnal day when Mr. Wilmot's light cart stopped at Mr. Richmond's door to take up "the preacher" and myself, with my companions in the book-parcel. The gloom of night had begun to settle down upon the landscape when the cart reached The Hawthorns, and in the clear sky right above a few stars were twinkling with the peculiar brightness indicative of a frost in the air. At least so the farmer said, as we shared the village, as I happen to know, being I had been taken out of the parcel in his inspection.

"You haven't forgotten Alice's book, Mr. Richmond? Dear lass, she is twenty-two to-morrow, and I know nothing will set her so well for a birth-day gift as a hymn-book. So give it to me that I may

put it by till the morning, for she is sure to come searching your pockets for books, as usual."

Mr. Richmond was prudently keeping his mouth shut, to exclude the cold air which met his face, and without waiting for a response the farmer went on—

"Such a girl for singing! First thing in the morning and last thing at night, is that lass's voice ringing through the house. I tell her she's lark and thrush and nightingale all in one. But bless her, she's only like David, when he says, 'I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth.'"

So the good man talked on, proud of his daughter, as he well might be, until the cart drove into the fold-yard, and he and the minister dismounted.

Though I was then in the farmer's pocket, I could hear the cheery voices that greeted him and his guest.

From my own observation of that evening, I can say nothing, but how often have I been present at similar scenes! Justice done to the ample tea, for which the nine miles' drive had given a salubrious appetite, the hour for divine service arrived. The Methodists had then no chapel in Oakshade, and the services were held in the big kitchen at The Hawthorns.

Can I not see it now? The large, deep fireplace, with room for one to sit actually in the chimney-corner on either side. The "long settle" standing between the fire and the door, shutting out all the draught and keeping in all heat, like a "hastener" before a fire. The tall brass candlesticks, polished till they positively sparkled again. The bright tins and stirrups and steelyard that graced the high mantel-piece. The sanded floor, scoured so clean that not a speck or stain was anywhere to be seen. The little congregation filling the place, sometimes a little sleepy as they sat still, feeling the heat of the fire, after many-hours' continual toil in the open air, but always wide awake at singing times. The farmer's spectacles, quite unnecessary, as I believe; Mrs. Wilmot's spotless cap; the farm-lads' round, red faces; the clean print dresses and neat aprons of the maids—are not the features of the picture permanently photographed before me? Then old Allen, the shepherd, our rustic precentor, with his flute that required so much screwing and unscrewing, and that did not always give "a certain sound." And above all, the huge, roaring fire, immediately in front of which, his back turned toward the chimney-piece, the preacher stood. It required no great exertion to preach in the kitchen at The Hawthorns, but many a time have I seen the good man mop his face like a mower in a June hay-field.

But those simple services were the only means of grace for the villagers at Oakshade. There was a church a mile or two distant, where prayers were hurriedly and indistinctly read on the Sunday afternoon; but the village would have been as dark as a Central African settlement but for the ministrations of Methodism. Good Mrs. Wilmot was the sick visitor for the whole region, and the farmhouse the only place where the children were instructed or the Word of God proclaimed.

It was on the next morning, however, that I first made acquaintance with Alice Wilmot. Her father came in to breakfast after a look round the farm, and she immediately ran to embrace him; while he wished her many happy returns of the day. I don't know whether Mr. Wilmot's eyes were not wet; I am sure his daughter's were. Then it was that I was duly presented to Alice as her parents' gift. And if you look within my cover you will see there, in characters legible enough if not elegant, "Alice Wilmot, from her father and mother, on her 21st birthday, with love and prayers." Happy the child whose privilege it is to be enriched by godly parents' "love and prayers!" The best blessings of both worlds are her heritage—human affection and heavenly grace. Strong human love sanctified by divine grace, and divine favour supplicated by affectionate hearts, as the best possession for their child.

"O father dear, the very thing I have longed for, a hymn-book all my own! And such a beauty!" (Do not accuse me of vanity, dear reader, because I repeat the lavish praises of my first professor.) "I love red morocco; and then the edges

are so nicely protected by that pocket-book like cover which I like so much. And here is actually a pocket! What can that be for? For notes of sermons? Oh, no; I guess that will be for society tickets." And so Alice chattered on, her cheeks glowing, and her eyes brightening, while her father and mother were delighted in her delight.

"May God make the book a great blessing to you, my child," said the good mother.

"Amen," said Mr. Wilmot; and Alice, having kissed her parents, went up to her own room to feast her eyes on the outside and inside of her new possession.

Shall I describe her? Graceful and slender, not too tall, but of dignified stature; fair, with rich brown hair that needed no artifice to make it curl and wave upon the shapely head, hazel eyes and pure complexion; lips richly red and sweetly parted with a smile that was the constant index of the peace and brightness of the pure soul of dear Alice. Such was my young mistress when I first knew her, and the years that have intervened since then have been powerless to obliterate the bright impressions of that hour.

I can hear her now, with a voice of singular purity and power, singing her first strain from my pages, as her eyes caught the jubilant words:

"How happy every child of grace,
Who knows his sins forgiven;
This earth, he cries, is not my place,
I seek my place in heaven!"

"To that Jerusalem above,
With singing I repair:
While in the flesh, my hope and love,
My heart and soul are there."

(To be continued.)

CURIOUS EGGS TEAT BIRDS LAY.

Among the queerest bird's eggs in the world are those of the tinamous of South America, which are distantly related to our own domestic fowls. Their most striking peculiarity is that the shell is beautifully polished and often very brightly colored. One species lays an egg of a deep stone color and of a polish so brilliant that it looks as if made artificially out of fine-grained rock. Other species have eggs that are pink or blue or green, in many different shades.

Among the North American bird's eggs, perhaps the most curiously marked are those of the flycatcher, of which the common, grey-crested flycatcher is a representative type. Their eggs have a delicate buff or cream-colored ground, varied by splashes of lavender and other soft, neutral tints. The most remarkable point about them, however, is that the whole surface is marked with fine lines, running lengthwise from end to end, and looking exactly as if they were made with pen and ink.

The eggs of some orioles and blackbirds are also very strangely marked, the markings often resembling, in a very striking way, Chinese characters and other grotesque figures.

Cuckoos, of the genus *crotophaga*, lay eggs which appear at the first glance to be of a uniform dull white, but on close examination it is found that this is merely a chalky coating over the surface. When the coating is removed, which is easily accomplished by gently scraping with a pen-knife, the shell is discovered to be of a very deep blue.

In South America there is a cuckoo that lays a similar egg, but the chalky coat, instead of being spread uniformly over the surface, is arranged in the form of a net-work, the blue showing in the spaces between the lines, so that the effect is as if the shell were covered with a fine white net. As may be imagined, it is very beautiful.

The egg of the California partridge and of its Arizona relation, the gambel's partridge, is covered with a delicate pinkish bloom, which softens and renders more beautiful the bold markings on the shell; but the touch of a finger destroys this bloom entirely, owing to the moisture of the skin. A drop of water will have the same effect.

Eggs of woodpeckers and kingfishers are always of the purest white, and so highly polished as to resemble the finest porcelain. Very beautiful, also, are the eggs of certain

small flycatchers, such as the wood pewee, which have a delicate buff or cream ground, exquisitely relieved by an encircling band of reddish brown or lavender spots.—*Natural Days.*

DICK'S GOOD MORNING.

"I had a curious thing happen to me this morning," said Mrs. Northern; she was putting away her bonnet, folding up her soft kid gloves, and putting the tiny scrap of lace veil into a small roll: "As I crossed the street by Dr. Campbell's I saw Mrs. Howland's little Dick, dancing along before me, his yellow curls bouncing up and down under the wide-brimmed hat. 'Good morning, Dick,' I called after him in a friendly tone. He did not hear me, but a poor, ragged-looking mulatto boy, dirty and ragged as you see in the curb-stone, and made me a bow: 'mawwin, mistis,' he said; 'I is poorly 'nuff dis mawwin, thank you mawwin for your kind axing.'"

"He evidently thought I was speaking to him when I said 'good morning Dick,' and I did not tell him I meant Mrs. Howland's little boy. I stopped and chatted with him a while, and found him poor, and as he seemed to think, without any friends. I hoped I encouraged him some."

"This was Mrs. Northern's side of the little story; some of the rest of us heard it from Dick himself:

"I had done low my place," said Dick, "cause I was sick, and I was powerful fretted 'ganst my Hebenly Father 'bout bein' sick, 'bout losin' my place, 'bout mos' everything. Seemed to me lek nobody in all dis big shinin' world cared nothin' for po' Dick. Let him live, let him die, it all de same: sun go on shinin', people keep goin' dis way, goin' dat, and Dick jes' drap out. Well, here comes along one of dem high steppin' ladies, everything 'bout her lookin' like a posy of garden pinks, and I turns in and gets mad at her, 'bout livin' soft an' fine, and not even givin' a look at po' folks, when, 'ole bless her, she says out loud and cheerfull like, 'good mawwin, Dick.' How come she know dis nigger's name? I dunno, I spect the Lord A'mighty told her. anyhow I felt different all over: I got up an' made my bow, an' told her how poorly I was, and she jus' stood dar in de sunshine, talking to Dick lek he was de president. 'Cheer up Dick,' says she, 'our Lord sets some of us on the up hill road and some on the level, but he goes along with us himself, and heaven is at the end of both paths, when we walk with him.'"

A SERMON BY AN INDIAN CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY.

His text was "Quench not the Spirit." He preached in a school-room in Dakota to the Indians, and in his sermon he said:

"The heart is a lamp. The body a room. I have in this school room a lamp. At night I come in here and I tumble over the chairs or stove, and run against the door. Why? The room is just the same as it is in the day time, and the lamp is here all right. Why do I make so many mistakes? I have not lighted the lamp. Now I light the lamp and I move along without hitting anything.

"We, as heathen, have a body, well made and with all the parts well formed and well placed. Our heart is there, but why do we stumble in life in the dark? Why is our life so hard? Why do we always dread death and fear the evil spirits? Because our heart has not been lighted. God can light your heart with his Holy Spirit, but to keep it burning you must keep close to God.

"If you get far away, forget to pray or read the Bible or to go to church and prayer meeting, the devil will blow out your light and the darkness will be denser than ever. Keep close to God! Keep on praying and studying the Bible and the devil will run away from you. If he is out of God's light he will make darkness."

The essential principle of tobacco is a great dehydrator of living tissue. Excessive use of it will cause the tissue of the heart to become as rotten as old rubber.