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"HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

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POETRY.

THE CHURCH-GOING BELL.

BY A. D. MILNE.

How dear to my soul is the dawn of that morning
Which bids the wild tumults of labour to cease;
When the heart, void of care, is early adorning
The Lord of the Sabbath, in rapture and peace.
Not a sound from yon city alights on the ear,
But stillness and beauty o'er all doth prevail,
Till anon, over mountain and valley we hear
The clear rising tone of the church-going bell,
It is ever sweet music, dear, welcome music,
We hail its loved music, the church-going bell.

That call of the morning brings mingled emotion,
Known, only known to the children of prayer,
As round the old altar they pour their devotion
To Him who hath promis'd to meet with them there;
Who hath wash'd all their stains in his life giving blood,
And taught their free tongues a new anthem to swell,
As they joyful advance on the Zion-ward road,
Marked out by the chime of the church-going bell.
That is ever sweet music, dear, welcome music,
We hail its loved music, the church-going bell.

Soon, soon may its toll from the crest of each mountain
Be wafted afar on the soft Sabbath air,
And soon may its echo from lake, stream, and fountain,
The march of the cross in its splendour declare,
Till the slaves of delusion and darkness are free,
And rising in joy at the sound of its knell,
From the ends of the earth, and from sea unto sea,
Bless the dawn that awakens the church-going-bell.
It will then be sweet music, earth's dearest music,
Ringing wide o'er the world, the church-going bell.

LITERATURE.

CONCLUSION OF MR. BIRKMYRE'S SERMON ON THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.

"But, here, let me remark, that the due observance of the Sabbath does by no means supersede, as I have already observed, the performance of works of necessity and mercy. We have the example of our Saviour to teach us that these are lawful on this day, and we have also his declaration, that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." We ought, however, to be exceedingly jealous, as to what constitutes a matter of necessity. If we merely consult our own personal ease and convenience, and not the word of God, and the voice of conscience, we shall find necessities innumerable springing up, to preclude us from spending this holy day as we ought. In this way the most trifling circumstance will furnish us with an apology for neglecting our duty. In this way, absence from public worship will come to be regarded as venial, on every trivial and meagre pretence. In this way, the forenoon's service will be uniformly disregarded, or the afternoon's service deliberately overlooked. I cannot away with half-day hearers. I am fully convinced, that there are but very few among us, who cannot be present at Church, during both services, provided there be only a willing mind. Delicate health, the cares of a family, and the necessity of allowing servants to hear the word of God, may oblige some to absent themselves, occasionally, from one, or from both services; but, at this moment, I declare, that I know of no other good and substantial reason, which can be adduced in justification of absence from the House of prayer, excepting inclemency of weather, or attendance at a sick or a dying bed. All these are acts of necessity or of mercy, which may not only be attended to on the Sabbath day, but which do plainly warrant absence from the public service of God; yet even these, I beg to say, apply more directly to the circumstances of the female, than of the male, portion of a congregation; for, it is seldom, indeed, that the latter have ever any sufficient excuse for absenting themselves from the courts of the Sanctuary.

"On the whole therefore, it may be observed, that the man who would approve himself unto God, is studiously observant of the Sabbath-day—is regular in his attendance on the public ordinances of religious worship, not making (as so many do) the forenoon, or the afternoon's service, suffice—is devoutly serious in listening to those solemn truths to which, in the House of prayer, his thoughts are directed—is zealous in offering up his sacrifices of prayer and praise, pub-

lic and private—is unceasing in his labours to recommend the Lord's day to the reverence of others—and is diligent in instructing in sacred matters those, whom Providence may have committed to his charge. And it is such a man as this, I add, that the Lord delighteth to honour. Peace here, and the unspeakable happiness of Heaven hereafter, shall be his richly to enjoy. On him, indeed, when "life's fitful fever" is at a close, a glory shall be conferred, infinitely more desirable than all the tinsel trappings, than all the sparkling distinctions, of the noble and the mighty of the earth—a glory, which shall out-live yon flaming orb, soon to leave the world to darkness and repose—a glory, which shall endure when sun and moon, and the stars shall have for ever disappeared—a glory, which shall flourish, in undecaying bloom, through the limitless ages of eternity—imperishable as the glory of the everlasting King!

"I beseech you, therefore, Brethren, by the living God, to reverence the Sabbath-day. Let it, indeed, be to you a season of rest from all worldly employments and recreations. Fancy not that the Sabbath is concluded, when the public services of the Church are at an end. Fancy not that you are then at liberty to indulge in foolish pastimes, in vain imaginations, in frivolous reading, in unprofitable conversations, or in idle sauntering. Fancy not that the evening of the Lord's day is to be spent as you please—in vanity, in indolence, in yawning and listless apathy. No—let it be devoted to self-examination, to sober reflection, to serious and profitable reading, to the exercises of prayer and praise. Let the study of the Bible be your principal occupation for the evening. Search the Scriptures, and ponder the sacred page. And O! be earnest in supplicating the divine blessing on all your doings—remembering that, without this, your souls will remain unbenefited and unimproved.

THE SHORTER CATECHISM.

FROM THE NEW YORK OBSERVER.

When I was a child of a very few years, my parents taught me the Shorter Catechism. It was a small matter for them, but I owe them a greater debt of gratitude for that instruction, than all the patrimony I ever received, or could have received, had they been "increased in goods."

Their method of teaching was simple but of exceeding value. At the close of each Sabbath day, the children were gathered, and a few of the questions in that catechism were asked and answered! and then every word was carefully and familiarly explained; then, the sentiment, the doctrines and duties were illustrated to meet our infant minds; and, last of all, the truth was urged upon our consciences that we might "lay it up in our hearts and practise it in our lives." Those were solemn seasons, on those Sabbath evenings. Seldom did they pass without witnessing many of that group in tears; and now, though years have rolled away, and changes have come over me, and the world has worked some of its hardening influence on my heart, my eyes fill with tears at the memory of that sacred season, and of the instructions I then received. Gray hairs may come, and memory may fail, as life's light burns dimly, but those Sabbath evenings will be among the last objects to be forgotten. I think I shall remember them till death comes, and in a dying hour, shall thank God for parents that hallowed those hours with their pious counsels, and their solemn prayers.

It was a rule in my father's house, and a good one, that each child should commit to memory, one answer in the Catechism each day, until the whole was learned. The labours of the week were rehearsed on the Sabbath; in the morning my mother heard us repeat our lesson, that we might be prepared for the general examination in the evening, when my father attended to our recitations, and enforced the truth upon our attention, and sought in prayer the blessing of heaven, for each of our souls. God bless those parents! May they never know

"How worse than serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child."

Doubtless the instruction which children receive from faithful pious parents, is one of the most efficient means, that can be employed for their conversion. In my own case, that instruction was directly connected with, and founded upon that system of doctrine, embodied from the word of God, in the Shorter Catechism; and when the Holy Spirit was applied to my heart, to awaken me to a sense of sin and danger, the truth thus taught, was the truth most prominent in

my thoughts, and most powerfully impressed on my soul. Assailed as I was, (during a protracted season of conviction and spiritual conflict,) the truth furnished by that Catechism was a shield against the suggestions of sceptics, and the desires and reasonings of a corrupt mind. Well do I remember, that in hours of temptation to doubt or disbelieve, that same truth was a wall of fire round about me.

And when, some years afterwards, the Lord, as I trust, called me to stand before the—Presbytery, as a candidate for the gospel ministry, that same Shorter Catechism, with its Scripture proofs, was of more service to me in the hour of trial, than all the books of Theology which I had read. Scarcely a question could be asked, upon the great truths of the gospel, that was not clearly and happily to be answered from the pages that were studied, not in the Seminary, but in the nursery at my mother's knee. So it has been in preaching the Gospel; the doctrines and duties of the word of God, as they are summarily set forth in the Shorter Catechism, have been constantly before me, and have furnished unvarying themes of systematic and precious instruction. Hence, it is not strange, that one of my first labours among a people, has been to place a copy of this little book, in the hands of each of the children of the church, and to exhort and charge their parents, most solemnly, to see that their children were required to learn it.

It was not a part of my purpose, in presenting this subject, to write a personal story, and yet this simple record, will furnish both argument and illustration. I commend the example of those who taught me the Catechism, as worthy of universal imitation, and my fear is, that such parents are not as numerous in the church at the present day, as they were some thirty or forty years ago. It is a fact that cannot be denied, that the good old practice of catechising the children, has long since been dispensed with, in families and churches, in many parts of our country; and if it be true, that in many churches, there has been a departure from the faith of our fathers, and that error has gradually and insidiously found its way into the minds and hearts of the people, I believe that this evil may, in a great measure, be justly attributed to the abandonment of the Shorter Catechism.

It is not in my heart to bring any charge of error or defection against the churches, but I will tell a story that will show what I mean, by saying that the distinguishing doctrines of the church, as taught in her standards, ought to be instilled into the minds of her children. Not long since I was passing the night with an elder of the Presbyterian Church, who in the course of conversation complained to me, that his minister believed "in the final perseverance of the saints." He was grieved that his pastor was so weak as to believe, and so "imprudent" as to preach such a doctrine. I expressed my astonishment, that an elder in the church should make such a complaint, and said to him that I was as weak and imprudent as his excellent minister. He was still more surprised, and enquired again, "What, do you believe in the doctrine of election?" "Certainly," said I, "and preach it as one of the most precious doctrines of the bible." His surprise was now unbounded, and I embraced the opportunity to urge upon his attention the great truths of the gospel system, that he had ignorantly professed to receive.

Who thinks that such belief would have been found in this man's mind, if he had been early and faithfully taught the Shorter Catechism? Either, he would have been more Orthodox in his faith, or, knowing that he did not believe as his brethren do, he would have sought another communion. Such examples are not unusual. I could easily multiply them, but have no disposition to give needless uneasiness to any minds. *Irenæus.*

DEATH OF THE MASTER OF GRANT, M.P. FOR INVERNESS-SHIRE.

(From the Elgin Courant.)

It is our most painful duty to announce the death of this excellent and amiable young gentleman, which took place, at Cullen House, on the morning of Wednesday last. Mr. Grant, accompanied by his immediate younger brother, arrived there the day before from London; and although he had been complaining of slight indisposition for some days, no apprehensions of danger on this account were entertained by his friends, who attributed his illness to the fatigues of a rapid journey, and the effects produced on an affectionate heart by the recent loss of his much lamented mother. He retired to bed at