

such feelings passing through his mind, Pharaoh put to Jacob the question, "How old art thou?" Laying aside the formal words of state, and condescending to the language of familiar converse, the King would hear from his own lips some particulars of his eventful life. He already knew that Jacob and his sons were worshippers of the one living and true God, and towards this religion many recent circumstances may have turned the attention of the King, and gained for it a favorable consideration. Then he wanted still further to learn the secret of that wonderful cheerfulness and joy that beamed in the Patriarch's countenance, notwithstanding his exceeding age, and how he was sustained in looking forward to the end of life.

If mere curiosity prompted the question, the King must have been sadly disappointed in the answer. Jacob undoubtedly well how seldom, in all probability, he would stand in the presence of royalty, and how earnestly he should improve the present opportunity. He would endeavour to impress upon the King the shortness of life, even though extended to a hundred and thirty years, and the vanity of all human possessions and enjoyments. He would help him to realise that existence here, when most lavishly enriched with every comfort and luxury that can fall to the lot of man, is after all but a pilgrimage of sorrow that leads to the grave. Nor are these solemn reflections only thrust at the King. With admirable tact and prudence, and in a manner at once solemn and unaffected he replies:—"The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been; and have not attained unto the years of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."

How strikingly do these few sentences photograph as it were the life of Jacob! "Few and evil" is the graphic description of his years. He had not attained the average duration of life in his ancestors, but suffering sufficient for the longest life had been his portion. Every new stage of his existence seems to have added new force to the poet's words, that "Man was made to mourn." His early and hurried flight from home to escape the vengeance of his brother Esau; the hunger, and thirst, and sleepless nights that doubtless marked his pilgrimage; the long years of service, and the frauds and treachery of Laban, practiced under the garb of friendship; the dissensions of his wives, and the quarrels of his children; the shame of Dinah his only daughter; the horrible wickedness of Reuben his first born, and the loss of his beloved son Joseph, forcing the aged patriarch to exclaim, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." These are but specimens of the trials that had saddened his days. Was it any wonder then that Jacob should at times have taken a gloomy view of God's providence, and in the anguish of his soul have felt that "all things were against him!"

If honestly put, there is no question susceptible of greater profit than that motto of this article, "How old art thou?" and yet there is no question we care less to answer. It would almost seem as if men imagined, that by allowing their years to pass unreckoned, they prolonged their existence and delayed the approach of death. To realise that we are growing old, that our strength is daily decreasing, that the memory is less retentive and the step is more languid and feeble,—in a word that we are no longer capable of the efforts our younger days, and are rapidly approaching second childhood, is of all knowledge the most distasteful. Instead of calculating how many sands of the glass are run, and anticipating an early, and it may be sudden summons to the eternal world, we fondly indulge the hope that life shall be extended to its utmost limit. We call up before us the names of friends still living whose age is far in advance of ours. We flatter ourselves that we have come of a long lived ancestry, who bravely battled with the King of Terrors, and only yielded when resistance was in vain. Thus we begin new projects and lay the foundation of new enterprises, when in the estimate of our fellow men, the only investment that remains for us is a few feet of mother earth, and a stone to mark the resting place of our ashes!

The pertinency of such a question will appear when we reflect for a moment upon the oft repeated statement that life is short, even when extended to three score years and ten. No readers of these lines will ever reach the age of the Patriarch Jacob, when he stood in the presence of Pharaoh. One hundred and thirty years had already passed over his head and nearly twenty years more were yet to run ere he should be gathered to his fathers. And yet in Jacob's estimation this was a brief existence. When a child in his fathers tent, innocent and happy, with no cares nor anxious forethought to disturb his dreams or shade his joys, his estimate of life was very different. The hundred and thirty years, that now seemed but a few days in retrospect, would then seem immensely long, more than enough to satisfy every longing of

his soul. And so it is with every reader of these lines who has reached or passed the age of manhood. You men of forty or sixty, whose heads begin to be whitened with the frosts of age, does it not seem but yesterday since you gambled with companions on the green and in the fields, and laughed and danced the hours away, from dewy morn till dusky eve! The impressions that remain of these early days are all but imperceptible. A name, a place, a countenance, rises up from amid the shadows of the past, but the years have glided from the vision as the clouds of the passing summer. And what of the years of riper age, in which hopes and fears in alternate round were born, and ripened, and died? years in which love was plighted and the household lighted up by the smiles of pure affection, that have been since reaped in death. How little of all the glad some or sombre experiences can you gather up from the tablet of memory? They have vanished and gone forever as the drops of dew in the morning sun, leaving behind them in too many cases the bitterness of memory and the anguish of despair. Some alas can appropriate these sweet but touching lines of England's great Humorist as they think of the past:—

I remember, I remember  
The house where I was born,  
The little window where the sun  
Came peeping in at noon.  
No never came a wink too soon  
Nor brought too long a day,  
But now I often wish the night  
Had borne my breath away!

I remember, I remember  
The fir trees dark and high,  
I used to think their tender tops  
Were close against the sky.  
It was a childish ignorance,  
But now its little joy  
To know, I'm further off from heaven  
Than when I was a boy!

Following up such a train of thought, we see the beauty and force of Scripture when speaking of the brevity and awful uncertainty of human existence. "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." How striking the illustration! As the mist or fog evidently and yet imperceptibly passes out of sight, so do we silently recede into the dark shadows of eternity. "My days are swifter than a post, they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to his prey. My days are swifter than a weavers shuttle, and are spent without hope. O remember that my life is ruined; my life shall no more see good." "Behold thou hast made my days as an hand breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." "Mine is departed" "says the good King Hezekiah, "and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent." "The days of our years are threescore and ten, and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is the strength labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away." "All flesh is grass and the glory thereof as the flower of the field." "We spend our years as a tale that is told." Human existence is thus compared to the purest things in nature. The whitening leaf, the fading flower, the vapour, the shadow, the shuttle. From the cradle to the grave it is but a step!

The brevity of human life is surely then a fitting theme for meditation. It is the dictate of wisdom, to number our days and apply our hearts to wisdom; to redeem the time seeing that the days are evil. We may number our days and reap no profit by the exercise. It may be nothing more than a mere sentimental reverie, destitute of all manly resolution and decision for the future. Merely to confess the shortness of existence and bemoan our mortality, is a profitless employment for any immortal soul. To number our days, by putting the question "How old art thou," implies a right apprehension of the object of life,—a determination honestly and zealously to discharge its duties, and to be always prepared for its close. Thus and thus only do we apply our hearts to wisdom. That man is wise, according to the world's opinion, who in business matters is shrewd and keen and clever; who knows how to make a bargain; who can match and over reach his neighbour; who succeeds by unrighteous and dishonest speculation, and wins the goal of popular applause. The patient, plodding, cautious, and honest merchant, who values conscience more than coin and character more than capital, is stigmatized as stupid and ignorant and altogether behind the age! But is it really so? Were there no eternity in prospect, were men mere animals, were annihilation our certain doom beyond the present, it might be wisdom for each man to gratify his sensual tasks. But is it so? Can it be so? Does any man believe it to be so? After death comes the judgment, is the united testimony of scripture, reason and conscience—endless weal or woe. The question then "How old art thou," in view of the terrible contingencies and awful realities of the future is the most pressing and important question of the hour.

Some perchance, who read these lines have never seriously considered the pos-

sibility of an early and sudden death. They are conscious, notwithstanding, of many secret and open breaches of the law of God. It takes but few years in life to become an expert in crime and skilled in wickedness—to sear the conscience and stain the comparative purity and innocence of childhood. Young in years, such are old in transgression. They have cherished evil thoughts, revelled in impure desires and indulged in secret and open sin, which they would not for the world have revealed to their nearest and dearest friends. Does not the question "How old art thou" bring up before the mind, years of folly and shame, that have passed to the bar of God with their dark and damning record? The name of God blasphemed—a Saviour despised—the Bible neglected—Sabbaths profaned and the sanctuary forsaken! Loving parents wept and prayed over you and wrestled for your salvation. On their bended knees, they commended and committed you to the care of heaven, and left the world, in the glorious hope that with them, you would share the unending felicities of heaven! If not hardened beyond measure, such memories, as these, must flush the cheek and alarm the conscience. "How old art thou?" Old enough surely to retrace your step. Old enough to know by sad experience that the way of the transgressor is hard, and that the steps of the profligate lead to perdition. Old enough to understand, that the longer you delay, the more difficult, if not impossible, is a sincere repentance. Old enough to stand before the dread tribunal of judgment, to enter upon an eternity of remorse! To reckon upon coming years is foolish. Death makes no compact with mortals and grants to none a certain lease of life. The present moment is all that you possess, the rest is beyond your knowledge.

To others who read these lines, the question "How old art thou" brings a certain measure of hopefulness as well as oldness. To such it may more appropriately be presented in its higher spiritual hearings, than as it relates to their term of existence in the world. "How old are you in grace?" How long since you were born into the Kingdom of God's dear Son? Has the growth of piety in your soul, steadily advanced in proportion to the years of your life? Have you reached any measure of maturity in faith, in knowledge, in patience, in joy and peace, and are these graces as evident to the world as they are sensible to your own experience? The stages of piety in your soul, should keep pace with your earthly sojourn and the flight of time. As we draw near the end of life, we should increase in strength and beauty of Christian character. What corresponding efforts, let me further ask, have you put forth, and what sacrifices have you made for the good of others? What results have Gods afflictive dealings with you produced? Do you realise more and more every day, that you are but a pilgrim and a stranger here? without home, and possessions, exposed to danger and peril, and are your satisfied with this scene of change and trial, until you find repose in that city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God? It cannot be very long till the call shall come and then farewell to sin and sorrow

"Yet peace, my heart; and hush my tongue;  
Be calm, my troubled breast;  
Each restless hour is hastening on  
The everlasting rest;  
Thou knowest that the time, thy God  
Appoints for thee, is best."

RELIGION OF THE DAY.

That noble man of God, Rev. A. A. Bonar, of Glasgow, Scotland, discourses thus.

"The religion of the day is an easy-minded religion, without conflict, or self-denial, or sacrifice; without the pangs of the new birth as its commencement and the desperate daily struggle which makes one long for resurrection deliverance and for the Lord's return. It is a second-rate religion, in which there is no power, no self-devotion, no all-constraining love. It is a hollow religion, marked by a fair exterior, by excitement and activity, or by respectable dullness; but betraying an aching, unsatisfied heart, a conscience not at peace with God, and a soul not at rest. It is a feeble religion, without bones and sinews, without the much-enduring heroic elements of other days. It is an uncertain religion, not being the overflowing of a soul assured of pardon, and rejoicing in the filial relationship with God, it is not, cannot be rested on certainty. The question of personal acceptance with God being still an unsettled thing, there is working for life, not from life. There is no liberty of service. All is bondage. There is speaking for God, but with a faltering tongue; there is laboring for God, but with fettered hands; there is obedience to His commands, but it is with a drag on the limbs; there is a going to church, but it is to quiet conscience and for duty's sake. Such a religion cannot tell upon others, for it is little influential upon one's self, so falls short of the mark, for the arm that draweth the bow is paralyzed."

Selected Articles.

SATURDAY NIGHT.

Placing the little boys all in a row,  
Ready for church on the morrow, you know,  
Washing two faces and little black fists,  
Getting them ready and fit to be kissed;  
Putting them into clean gowns and white;  
That is what mothers are doing to-night.

Spying out holes in the little worn hose,  
Laying by shoes that are worn through the toes,  
Looking o'er garments so faded and thin—  
Who but a mother knows where to begin?  
Changing a button to make 't look right—  
That is what mothers are doing to-night.

Calling the little ones all 'round her chair,  
Hearing them list forth their soft evening prayer,  
Telling them stories of Jesus of old,  
Who loves to gather the lambs to his fold;  
Watching they listen with childish delight—  
That is what mothers are doing to-night.

Crooping so softly to take a last peep,  
After the little ones all are asleep;  
Anxious to know if the children are warm,  
Tucking the blanket round each little form,  
Kissing each little face, rosy and bright—  
That is what mothers are doing to-night.

Kneeling down gently beside the white bed,  
Sowly and meekly she bows down her head,  
Praying as only a mother can pray,  
"God guide and keep them from going astray."

DR. CUYLER ON GLADSTONE.

On Tuesday morning I spent a most interesting and delightful half hour with Hon. Mr. Gladstone, at his residence in Carlton House Terrace. The Premier lives very handsomely in a stately old mansion, well adorned with paintings and sculpture. He receives his guests with much of the affable dignity of Daniel Webster. I wish that I dared to report the noble utterances of the great statesman during his conversation on the unhappy controversy now raging between the two nations. It was not only the utterance of a true statesman, but of a true Christian. I have had the good fortune to converse freely with some of the most eminent men of Britain and America; but no one of them ever so impressed me by his simple grandeur of bearing, of speech, and of pure moral purpose as did William E. Gladstone. He has a warm heart, vital, and large, loving sympathies with the poorest and lowliest.

Some time ago a poor street-sweeper, while sick, told his minister that he had been "visited by Mr. Gladstone!" "What Gladstone?" enquired the rector. "Why," replied the sick man, "the only Mr. Gladstone. I used to sweep his crossin'; and one day he missed me, and he hears that I am sick, and so he comes and sees me and prays with me." With such a man we can safely trust any negotiations on any great question of moral right.

This morning I had the honour of breakfasting with the Premier; the other guests being the venerable Dean Ramsay, of Edinburgh, and the Rev. Newman Hall, and Prof. Talbot, of Oxford. The impression produced in my first impression was deepened when I saw the great statesman in the familiar freedom of his happy home. He unbent into the most lively playfulness, and a cosier chat I never enjoyed around a breakfast-table. After breakfast came in the official dispatches from Geneva. The Premier read them, and said to me, "Everything looks well. I do not see what can possibly hinder the happy settlement of all our difficulties."

Mrs. Gladstone is not only a lady of most genial and attractive manners, but is thoroughly devoted to labours of love among the poor. Her "pet" institution of charity is a hospital for convalescents near Woodford. This she visits every week. She often goes to see the poorest sufferers in the old "city" end of London, sometimes leaving fresh flowers as well as material aid, in the room of suffering. From no woman in England have I heard more noble utterances of devout and tender Bible religion than from the wife of the British Premier. They have a large family, one of the sons being an Episcopal Clergyman. As I left the mansion this morning I met the Duke of Argyll in the hall, paying his usual morning visit to the head of the government. The real ruler of England is not in Windsor Palace. He is in Carlton House Terrace, and God grant that he may long be there!—N. Y. Observer.

SCOLDING AT THE TABLE.

I do not wish to hold up my brothers family as a model, and you must not think me merely partial because I talk sometimes about it. I see more of it than of other families. I come and go in it as I please, having a sort of non-discrep relation there. They do not consider me "company" and so are not on their good behaviour. At the same time I am not so intimately connected with them as to feel that I am talking about myself, when I am speaking about the way things are done there.

I like to be at their table. It is a good and cheery place. I do not pretend to say that it is never anything else, but I am pretty sure that their

meals at either breakfast, dinner, or supper are usually pleasant occasions. I suspect—indeed my brother and his wife have said so, that they made it a direct object at which they aimed. It did not come of itself. In some families the mealtime is the occasion for settling up the scores of the previous six hours. A boy has been delinquent, forgotten some errand; a girl has been careless, and the garment she had to look over lies just as mother left it in her room; a brother has been teasing a sister, and she has been "taking his things and breaking them." The mealtime brings the parties face to face, and gives a capital opportunity to make and answer accusations. So the father hauls the boy over the coals, and the mother the daughter. The faulty ones cannot escape, but must sit and hear. Harry has his tale of wrong to tell as soon as father and mother have paused, and Carrie must "take this opportunity" of unfolding her grievance, and tell how "mean" Tom has been, while Tom stands on his defence, and tells what a soury trick Carrie played on him. And the mutual attacks and defences are not left to separate parties; the current sweeps in the whole circle. Have you never seen how it works? Father finds fault, and from the other end of the table mother moves up a battalion in aid of an attack. Ida makes a flank movement, and opens with a volley, while small Charley, catching the enthusiasm of the moment, comes in on the rear, and so poor Tom is overwhelmed front and rear, and on either side. Scolding is contagious around a table, especially if you have fresh in mind an illustrative fact to set forth Tom's fault more strikingly.

Now all this does not especially add to Tom's enjoyment, or positively increase his appetite; and, indeed, I imagine does not materially assist the digestion of the group. After having a season of general "pitching into" one another, the table usually grows silent, not with exuberant smiles or mirth. When this has been repeated for a while and has grown into a habit, the hour when the call summons the family to the table awakens the opposite of pleasurable emotions. Each son and daughter instinctively asks what music they will have to face, and are sure that, while it may be lively, the chances are many that it will not be full of the best harmony. They think of the possible scolding in close connection with the eating, like that poor little fellow who was so accustomed to being punished just before he went to bed, that, one night as the sleepy time came on, he said, "Mother, I'm sleepy, please whip me and send me to bed." "Come to supper and get scolded," would be the idea awakened in many a child's mind at the supper call.

My brother and his wife tell me that this habit of seizing mealtimes for fault-finding, is so natural and easy that they unconsciously found themselves falling into it. No day or but a few days could pass in a family as large as theirs, without something going wrong, and something being done that needed to be reproved or corrected, and it seemed the very best time to bring it up as all were together. So, before they were aware, each meal threatened to become a time of trouble. Reprover and reprovand alike were made uncomfortable, and the enjoyment of the family was destroyed. They determined to make an end of it. Now, however a child might have been delinquent, the fault is not brought up at meal time neither by father or mother, and no matter what the grievance is between the children, they are not permitted to exhibit it then or there. John says that to have one's food do him good, the mind ought to be as comfortable as possible at the table and immediately after it; so he does not propose to spoil his digestion by getting into an ill-humour, nor make what his boys or girls have eaten unwholesome either by anger or sorrow. He says that he and his wife now keep their reproofs for some times between meals. They intend that every one, if possible, shall be in a good humour while eating. They carefully enforce the idea. The other evening when Fanny seemed very full of some wrong that Tom had done to her—Tom is one who is more apt than any one else to get into trouble—and must let out her complaint, her father looked up quietly, as she began, and said, "Fanny, I guess we won't talk of that now; some other time!" Then he asked some question of one of the boys about his school, and soon the table was alive with pleasant talk.—Christian Weekly.

One reason that the world is not reformed is, because everybody would have others make the beginning, and thinks not of himself.

A good, finished scandal, full-armed and equipped, such as circulates in the world, is rarely the production of a single individual, or even of a single coterie. It sees the light in one; is rocked and nurtured in another; is petted, developed and attains its growth in a third, and receives its finishing touches only after passing through a multitude of hands.—Selected.