

aspect and contemplative turn. Look, too, into the community around. There is our neighbour, Bob French; he is always full of spirits and animation, and always ready for a joke. And yet he is deeply interested in religion, and seems to enjoy all its duties. On the other hand, there is John Grant, who has not entered a church these five years, and who sneers at religion and at all connected with it; and yet what a solemn, demure countenance he wears. The celebrated Rowland Hill was as much distinguished by his humour and oddity, as he was for his deep interest in religion. He could not talk five minutes without giving occasion for a smile; and, though he never purposed it, he seldom delivered a sermon without moving the risibles before he was through. And yet, though born to wealth and belonging to the proud aristocracy of England, his time, his influence, and his wealth, were all devoted to the promotion of religion in the world."

Here Fanny looked up with a smile. "And so, father," said she, "you are thinking that I shall make such a funny sort of Christian as Rowland Hill?"

"No, child, I hope you will not have as many odd and ludicrous conceits to contend with as he did. Still you will never make a very staid, serious or contemplative person. Yet you may be as good, and even a better Christian, than many who possess those traits of character."

"Father," said Fanny, "the other day I heard Dr. Jones say, that nothing was better for the health than a hearty laugh; and that half the time I could furnish a better prescription, at least for the preservation of health, than any of his medical nostrums. He said that every one ought to laugh, at least once a day, so as fairly to shake his sides."

"No doubt there is some truth in the Doctor's remark," said Mr. Moreland, "and it were well if some religious persons were convinced of this fact. It is true, that habitual levity of mind is inconsistent with Christian character; but it is equally true, that occasional seasons of relaxation and merriment may sometimes be a duty. It seems to me that the constitution of things, in this world, is adapted rather to what men ought to be, than to what they are. If religion held that place in their thoughts and interests which its importance demands, it would produce such strong stimulus, and such deep feeling, as might injure both health and reason, unless some alternative could be introduced, that would, at times, relax the mind, and turn it entirely from such exciting and engrossing interests. And there seems to be a class of persons who, by constitutional temperament, are predisposed to furnish this kind of relaxation, which in proper times and proportions is not only lawful but healthful. The difficulty is, that men do not give religion its proper place in their interests; and yet, that the love for this kind of excitement is so strong that there is constant danger of going to dangerous extremes. And it is because of this danger that there is so much watchfulness in the religious world, in excluding this kind of enjoyment. And the great difficulty always must be, to decide when and how much of this kind of relaxation is safe and right."

"A person constituted as you are, needs to bear in mind, not only what may be right in itself considered, but also the circumstances in which you may be placed. Your danger and temptation will be to excessive levity; and it may aid you to control it, to bear in mind, that the excessive levity and amusements of worldliness have led many pious minds too far in an opposite extreme; so that you will often be called to practise on the principle of the apostle, when he would not eat meat offered to an idol; not because he deemed it wrong in itself, but because it might tempt a weak brother to offend. So you are required to be careful not to tempt others to violate their conscience by doing what you deem innocent and lawful."

"You will find that many irreligious persons, also, suppose that the profession of religion includes a belief that all merriment is wrong and to be avoided. In such society, you ought not to allow what they will suppose to be a violation of your principles, unless you can have a proper opportunity to make known what they are."

"The most proper time and place for such indulgences is in the family circle, at home. Parents, in the nursery, or at the fire-side, can find opportunities enough for relaxation, by joining in the sports and amusements of their children. At the same time, they will be gaining an influence over their children that none can secure so surely as those who share in their amusements. This is the reason why your mother and myself so often have joined in your amusements; and why we have allowed you so free license at home, while we strove to restrain you abroad."

"It will do you good to be placed under those circumstances of restraint, which kindness and Christian principle will impose in the society of your uncle; and it is possible you may modify some of his notions, that verge to an extreme of restriction, by watching your time, and accommodating to circumstances, with a kindness and tact which you know how to employ."

Fanny paid the visit to her uncle, and, with her usual fortune, was just in time to witness the only ludicrous occurrence that had happened in the village for years. It was the very next Sunday after her arrival. She had just seated herself in the antiquated church, the relic of the earliest period of the village history. It

was a beautiful, warm, winter morning, succeeding one of those *sleet storms*, so well known in New England, which cover all nature with a garb of smooth and shining ice. The houses reflected the sun, like vast mirror plates; the tapering stalactites hung gleaming from the eaves; every tree and shrub was bending beneath its shining load, while the slightest twig or spray was bearing its sparkling jewel. The drifted snowbanks, the whitened fields, the fences, rocks, and every visible object, were glistening in sheets of transparent ice.

Within the church, the congregation were assembled, waiting in silence for the commencement of service. Uncle Enoch was seated in the elevated box, yelet a pulpit, under the pendant, steeple-shaped sounding board, which, as Fanny said, looked like a turnip hanging over an apple-bin. In front of the pulpit, in the little pen called the deacon's seat, sat Deacon Smith, with white hair, meek countenance, and half closed eyes; and beside him Deacon Tathill, with a stolid, fixed and solemn look. The singers were seated opposite, in the gallery, headed by Squire Bissel, the chorister, with his pitch-pipe before him, all ready for use. The side door, which, in old fashioned churches in New England, opens into the broad aisle, directly opposite the pulpit, was standing open to admit the warm rays of the sun.

No sound was heard, except the regular patter of the drops from the eaves, or an occasional crash, as some burdened tree, assisted by the sun, shook off its heavy load, and sent the rattling fragments far and wide, till their last tinkle died away into silence.

The church stood at the foot of a hill, so steep that no direct path led to the side door; but, as the sleighs and foot passengers came along, they could be seen through the open door, passing on the summit of the hill, as they wended along down to the back of the church.

Just as Uncle Enoch rose to commence the service, a sleigh passed on the top of the hill, and, as it came opposite the door, Miss Betsy Bibbins also was seen walking along, with her little wooden foot-stove in her hand. Now this Miss Betsy was a comfortable little dolt of a body, who always calculated to do every thing just about right; one who never troubled herself about others, while others never troubled themselves about her; a quiet, insignificant person, who seemed to be placed in society just "to fill up a chunk."

She was always dressed just so, and no otherwise; and she carried the most placid look of satisfaction at every thing about herself. The sleigh overtook Miss Betsy; she stepped out, so as to be sure not to be in the wrong place. Just then her foot slipped, and, finding she could not stand, Miss Betsy sat; and, finding she could not sit still, she began to move; and though she would greatly have preferred another course, it was directly toward the open church door. First, off slid her nicely folded handkerchief, then, her psalm book followed after, and, continuing its course, entered the church door with a bounce, as if to announce the approach of its owner. At length down came Miss Betsy, holding up her foot-stove in one hand, and anxiously paddling along with the other, till she came, full tilt, clear through the door, and plump into the broad aisle. Then, with a most rueful look, she gathered herself up, and, trotting round a corner, ensconced herself in her wonted seat, and sat as demure and quiet as if nothing in particular had occurred.

The shock on the congregation was irresistible. No mortal, that had a risible, could refrain from, at least, a momentary twitch. Uncle Enoch, as he stood fronting the scene, had witnessed it all, and for a moment he was obliged to step back and hide his face. But it was only a moment, and it was followed by such a look of contrition, and such a prayer of penitent humiliation, that seriousness and devotion were soon restored to their wonted rest.

But, after this, Fanny easily gained her starting point; that the control of our risibles is sometimes beyond our power; and then she urged the peculiarities of natural temperament; and then she pled her own cause, with one whose heart was all on her side; and ere she left, she had so adjusted matters, that she never again was found weeping at the thought of a visit to Uncle Enoch.

### SELF-COMMUNION.

WRITTEN FOR THE HULL MECHANICS' INSTITUTE.

By Ebenezer Elliott.

#### Part II.

When I say that verse is not poetry, and that prose may be, I utter no paradox, nor have I any cause to gain any battle to win; for poetry wins its own battles. This age, fertile in great poets, may not have produced one who is singly equal to Shakespeare; but it has produced two, whose joint merits are a counterpoise to Shakespeare's utmost worth—Scott, in characterisation and poetry; and Bulwer, in poetry, intellectuality, wit, and felicity of expression. The author of "Eugene Aram" is a great epic poet. His novels abound in poetry, that speaks, like Scott's, through the heart to the eye, and, like Dante's, to the inmost soul.

Take example from his "Rienzi," describing the page of that personage, hastening, too late, to beg the life of his father, whom he himself had, in ignorance, betrayed:—

"As one frantic, as one whom a fiend possesses or pursues, he rushed from the convent, he flew through the desolate streets. The death-bell came, first indistinct, then loud, upon his ear. Every sound seemed to him like the curse of God; on, on—he passed the more deserted quarter; crowds swept before him—he was mingled with the living stream—delayed, pushed back—thousands on thousands, around, before him. Breathless, gasping he still pressed on—he forced his way—he heard not—he saw not—all was like a dream. Up burst the sun over the distant hills!—the bell ceased! From right to left he pushed aside the crowd; his strength was as a giant's. He neared the fatal spot. A dead hush lay like a heavy air over the multitude. He heard a voice as he pressed along, deep and clear—it was the voice of his father!—it ceased—the audience breathed heavily—they murmured—they swayed to and fro. On, on, went Angelo Villani. The guards of the senator stopped his way; he dashed aside their pikes—he eluded their grasp—he pierced the armed barrier—he stood on the Place of the Capitol. 'Hold, hold!' he would have cried—but his tongue clove to his lips. He beheld the gleaming axe—he saw the bended neck. Ere another breath passed his lips, a ghastly and trunkless face was raised on high—Walter de Montreal was no more!

"Villani saw—swooned not—shrunk not—breathed not!—but he turned his eyes from that lifted head, dropping gore, to the balcony, in which, according to custom, sate, in solemn pomp, the senator of Rome—and the face of that young man was as the face of a demon!

"Ha!" said he, muttering to himself, and recalling the words of Rienzi, seven years before, 'Blessed art thou who hast no blood of kindred to avenge!'

Almost all Barry Cornwall's serious lyrics confirm the principle that poetry is self-communion. How many hopeless idlers, trading gamblers, lovers who dare not tell their loves, and mourners whose loves are in the grave—how many reckless and desperate, and broken and breaking hearts, are there at this moment around us, all eagerly, but each in its own way, drinking King Death's coal-black wine!

"King Death was a rare old fellow—  
He ate where no sun could shine,  
And stretched out his hand so yellow,  
With a glass of his coal-black wine:  
Hurrah! the coal-black wine!  
There came to him many a maiden  
Whose eyes had forgot to shine,  
And widows with grief o'er-laden,  
For a glass of his sleepy wine:  
Hurrah! for the rare old fellow,  
Who laugh'd till his eyes dropp'd brine,  
As he stretched out his hand so yellow,  
And pledg'd them in Death's dark wine:  
Ha, ha! the coal-black wine!"

Behold, with the eyes of your hearts, the statue of the dying gladiator, and then read Byron's description of it. They are both poetry. Is silence poetry, then? Oh, certainly. I am reading Byron's description now, in my soul, though to you I have not yet uttered a syllable of it.

"I see before me the gladiator lie:  
He leans upon his hand; his manly brow  
Consents to death, but conquers agony;  
And his droop'd head sinks gradually low;  
And, through his side, the last drops, ebbing slow  
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,  
Like the first of a thunder shower;—and now  
The arena swarms around him—he is gone,  
Ere ceas'd the shout that hail'd the wretch who won.  
He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes  
Were with his heart, and that was far away;  
But where his rude hut on the Danube lay,  
There were his young barbarians all at play,  
There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,  
Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday!  
All this gushed with his blood. Shall he expire,  
And unavenged? 'Arise, ye Goths!'

But this, you may say, is the poetry of noise. Why so? The words "Arise, ye Goths!" would be equally effective, if uttered in the lowest possible tone. The deep feeling of hatred which they breathe, might not actually have made its whisper audible. Perhaps, the dying man could not have made it audible. But suppose yourselves present at the spectacle, with a brother of the Dacian, disguised among his enemies! How would he express those words? If sorrow and rage did not conquer prudence, he would choke them in his heart; but, if he forgot his danger, he would start up, the representative of indignant human nature, and, bidding long-outraged nations redress themselves, shout, as I have done, "Arise, ye Goths!" Two individuals, then, might recite this poetry differently, yet both well—that is to say, each according to his nature? Certainly they might. Poetry, then, is not alike to all? Certainly it is not. To some persons it does not exist; to those who have no hearts, it is a nonentity. In matters of taste, then, let there be no dictation. Who shall tell that wonderful instrument, the human heart, in what particular key it shall play its tunes?

To show you that the stillest thoughts are often the deepest or the strongest, I will quote a few lines of what is called mere description, from the most thoughtful of poets—Wordsworth: