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Poetry.

THE OLDEST CHRISTIAN HYMN.

In Paed. Lib. III. of Clement of Alexandria, is given (in Greek) the most ancient hymn of the Primitive Church. It is then (one hundred and fifty years after the apostles) asserted to be of much earlier origin. It may have been sung by the "beloved disciple" before he ascended to his reward. The following version will give some imperfect idea of its spirit:—

Shepherd of tender youth!
Guiding, in love and truth,
Through devious ways;
Christ, our triumphant King,
We come thy name to sing;
And here our children bring
To shout thy praise.

Thou art our holy Lord!
The all-subduing Word!—
Healer of strife!
Thou didst thyself abase,
That from sin's deep disgrace
Thou mightest save our race,
And give us life.

Thou art Wisdom's High Priest!
Thou hast prepared the feast
Of holy loves
And in our mortal pain
None calls on thee in vain;
Help thou dost not disdain—
Help from above.

Ever be thus our guide!
Our shepherd and our pride,—
Our staff and song!
Jesus! thou Christ of God!
By thy perennial word,
Lead us where thou hast trod—
Make our faith strong.

So now, and till we die,
Sound we thy praises high,
And joyful sing.
Infants, and the glad throng
Who to thy Church belong,
Unite, and swell the song,
To Christ our King.

Christian Miscellany.

"We need a better acquaintance with the thoughts and reasonings of pure and lofty minds."—Dr. Sharp.

The Bible-Fragment.

A fragment of Holy Scripture has sometimes led to great results. When Captain Pakenham was engaged at Florence in carrying through the press an edition of the Bible, the printers employed were so astonished at the truths they were putting together, that many of them procured copies of the entire volume for themselves. We have read of a single torn leaf of the word of life which conveyed salutary instruction to a young man in the East Indies, and prepared the way for the Missionary to lead him to the Crucified One. But the most striking instance of the Book, with which we have recently met, is found in the "Recollections of Mick Healy, an Irish Peasant," recently published in Dublin, by the Rev. John Gregg. From the interesting and instructive pages of Mr. Gregg's narrative, we learn that Mick Healy was a native of the county of Meath. His father held a small farm, to which, at his decease, Mick succeeded. By industry and economy, he continued to provide for himself and his family, and for several years regularly paid his rent. An event, however, occurred, which altered his character, and soon made a change in his position and prospects. His parents had been Papists. His relatives and neighbours, and indeed the people generally in that part of the country, belonged to that persuasion. He was a strict Romanist. He went regularly to his place of worship, attended to confession, and punctually paid his dues. He had the approbation of his Priest, and was looked upon by every one as a good Catholic.

Mick Healy had reached the age of fifty before he had read, or even seen, the word of God. One day, when detained in the house by rain, he employed himself for a time in rummaging an old trunk which had belonged to his father. In turning over the

contents of his trunk, he lighted on the fragment of a book: he took it out, and read a few pages, and then replaced it where he found it. The day cleared up, and he went to his work. On every succeeding day, when leisure came, he visited the trunk, took out the fragment, and resumed his reading. The more he read, the more he wished to read. On the Sabbath he was wont to take the book with him to the back of a hedge, that alone, and free from interruption, he might enjoy his newly found treasure. During all this time he had not the slightest notion what the book was, with which he was so much delighted. It was, in truth, only the fragment of a book, and had neither title page nor inscription.

When he was engaged, one day, in this his favourite recreation, the Popish schoolmaster happened to pass by. As Mick was an acquaintance of his, he came over to speak to him. He gave him the usual salutations; and, as he cast his more experienced eye on the pages which Mick was reading, he exclaimed, "Ah Mick you are reading the Bible: you are a swaddler, and I will tell the Priest." "The Bible, indeed!" said Mick: "it is only an old book of my father's that I am reading." "O, I know well that it is the Bible," said the schoolmaster; "and if you don't stop reading it, I will tell the Priest." "I don't care to whom you tell it," said Mick: "it was my father's book, and I will read it, in spite of any one, as long as I like." The schoolmaster was horrified.—That he might not appear to countenance such conduct, he lost no time in informing the Priest how he had found Mike Healy employed; while, to prove how free from heresy he was, he did not fail to tell him how he had warned Mike against the Bible; and he reported faithfully what Mick had said in reply. This was no music to the Priest's ears. It was dreadful to think that a Catholic should employ himself in reading the word of God, or even have it at all without his leave. In a day or two after, he called at Mick's house; and, trying gentle means at first, he said, "What is this I hear of you Mick? I am sorry to hear of your father's son." "What is the bad thing your Reverence has heard of me?" said Mick. The schoolmaster tells me that you are become a Bible-reader; and sure you will not disgrace your family, and bring a scandal on the parish." "O, never mind him, your Reverence," said Mick: "it is only an old book of my father's, which I found in the trunk, which I do be reading." "How long have you been reading it?" said the Priest. "Only about a year, your Reverence," said Mick. "Show it to me," said the Priest. Mick proceeded to the trunk, and, producing the fragment, handed it to him. "Sure enough," said the Priest, as he looked through the pages, "it is the Bible; and, Mick, you must not read it any more: it is not fit for you; you might take a wrong meaning out of it, and it might make a heretic of you." Mick, taking the book out of the Priest's hands, said, "O, your Reverence, it won't do me any harm; it does my heart good to read it. I never met any book like it: if it does not make me better, I'm sure it won't make me a worse man." The Priest then said, in a mild tone, "O Mick, you must not keep it at all; it is not safe for you to have it: give it to me, and, as it was your father's, I will keep it, and take care of it for you." "Give you my father's book?" said Mick: "indeed please your Reverence, I will do no such thing. I can keep it and take care of it myself." The Priest's tone was now changed: all his efforts to get it from him by coaxing were in vain. Mick would not part with his inheritance. The Priest stormed. Mick was calm; which, no doubt, was very provoking. He held it in his hand, and he said, "And is this the Bible, your Reverence? But sure it wants a piece here,"—turning to the first page of his fragment, which was in the middle of Exodus; "and sure it wants a piece there,"—turning to the last page, which was part of the Prophet Daniel. "Where could I get the pieces,

your Reverence? Will you give them to me, or tell me where I can find them?" This did not quiet the Priest much. In an angry tone he refused to comply with Mick's request. Anxious only for the book, and without meaning any offence, Mick calmly urged his entreaty. This made matters worse; it was adding fuel to the fire: yet what could be done? Longer delay might end in worse defeat; and so the Priest left the house; but in the worst possible humour, while Mick very composedly remained, and quietly sat down to read.

The Priest, however, continued to thunder against the peasant, in order to shake his resolution; but Mick was resolved to keep and read the fragment, and at any hazard, if possible, to procure the remainder. It was soon noised abroad that Mick Healy read the Bible, that he would not give it up for the Priest, and that he was become a Protestant. Some of the people thought it would be as well for Mick to have a serpent in the house as the Bible; that he could not have any luck as he went against the Priest; and that he must have the devil in him, since he became a Protestant. They thought that it would not only be dangerous, but a disgrace, to have anything to do with him. Mick went to mass as usual, but the Priest looked dark and cross at him. The people shrank from him as if he had the plague; they shunned his company with the greatest aversion, and altogether deserted his house. They were warned to keep aloof from him, partly, it is supposed, for their own sake, that they might not be infected; and partly for his sake, that he might be driven to give up the Bible. But neither cunning nor coldness, neither frown nor favour, would induce Mick to give up the book. The coldness and aversion with which he was at first regarded were succeeded by threats and abuse; but as he had incurred man's anger for God's word, he seemed to be rather cheered by God's favour. The methods which were pursued towards him, seemed to produce an effect opposite to what was expected. The conduct of Priest and people, together with the knowledge of Scripture with which he was daily acquiring, gradually cooled his passion for the services of the chapel; and his visit to it became less frequent, and, at length, they altogether ceased.

He now heard, by some means or other, that a Minister at Navan, or at Trim, it is not quite certain which, had Bibles, and would be likely to give him one, if he went to him for it. Accordingly, he set out, and travelled to one or other of those places: the one was distant about twelve miles, and the other about sixteen. He called on the Minister. "Sir," said he, "I have a bit of the Bible, but I would like very much to have it all." He then took the fragment from his bosom, and showed it to him. The Minister entered into conversation with him; and when he perceived that he had made good use of the part of the Bible which he possessed, and was really anxious to have the entire volume, the worthy man gave him a good octavo Bible, which Mick afterwards showed Mr. Gregg, and which it is thought he kept and read to the day of his death. Mick returned home with his treasure on the same day: thus walking, at least, twenty-four miles; but this was as nothing to him for the love he had to the Bible. He now became a thorough and confirmed Bible-reader. He struck out boldly into the wide extent of Scripture: he felt himself in a new world. When he came to the New Testament, he was lost in amazement. He followed the "Man of sorrows" through His wondrous history, from the manger to the cross, and from the grave to His ascension. He felt that he had been poor before, but that now he was rich: he felt his heart dilating with love to all men. He would fain communicate what he knew of Jesus to every one he met. He could not, however, get his wife and children to enter into his feelings; and his neighbours and friends would not come within his reach.

He went on for some time working on the

farm by day, and reading in the Bible by night. But it so happened that by the loss of his cattle, and the failure of his crops, he was in arrear of rent; and, as he was entirely dependent on his own resources, and no man would lend him money, he was dispossessed of his farm. His landlord was a Romanist. Mick (as Mr. Gregg was informed) was not a worse tenant, or more in arrear, than many others on the estate, to whom indulgence had been granted, and who were suffered to remain. But Mick had become a Protestant, and had placed himself, in consequence, beyond the pale of pity. He might infect others; his example might be imitated; and then no one could tell where the mischief would end. It may have been thought a good opportunity, one not to be lost, to root out an obnoxious man. Be it as it may, poor Mick was thrown out of the house where he had begun his days, and where he too fondly hoped he would end them. The farm passed into other and strange hands.

With heavy heart and painful steps, he now removed into a poor mud-cabin, to shelter himself and his family. No human eye was near to pity him, nor hand to lend relief. But he had God's Word. He could say, "This is my comfort in my affliction; for Thy word hath quickened me." He could also say, "It is the Lord; let Him do as seemeth Him good." "The will of the Lord be done." He sought employment from the neighbouring farmers, but could not obtain it, for they were prejudiced against him. Many who are ever ready to cry aloud for liberty of conscience for themselves, are slow enough to grant it to others. He was driven at length for the support of his family, to have recourse to the humblest occupation; and was happy to be employed on the public roads, in breaking stones for eightpence a day. But this did not conquer his heroic spirit. He went cheerily to his work in the morning, and returned more cheerily to his family and his Bible in the evening. His cup of trial was not yet full. It pleased God to send sickness into his family. His wife and two sons were visited at the same time with fever. The Lord kept the disease from himself. No neighbour would come near to assist at the sick bed: it may have been from fear, more likely from bigotry, as otherwise the Irish are kind and compassionate. All the offices of humanity were performed by himself. He alone went to the stream, and carried in the water; he alone moistened the parched lips, and cooled the burning temples; he alone sat up, and watched with sleepless eyes each livelong night. God took away from him one of the objects of his care—a much-loved child—a grown-up youth. Though grieved and afflicted, yet, like Job, he could say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." He gazed and wept over the manly but lifeless form, his fair but faded flower. No neighbour came in to share his sorrows. Poor Mick's own hands closed the eyes: his own hands washed the body, placed it in the coffin, lifting up the hammer, and fastened down the nails; and then, sorrowing and sobbing, uncomfited and unattended, he laid it down sadly and slowly in the lonely grave.

(To be continued.)

Amusements.

If Christians join in what are called worldly amusements, I ask nothing about their creed. They show their taste; that is enough. A mere creed, however correct, will save no man. The influence of the creed is the essential matter.

Economy.

True economy, both with regard to money and time, is of the greatest importance. What good might we do, if we did not waste money! What persons might we be, if we improved time!