

Family Reading.

THE REDBREAST.

A LEGEND OF EASTER.

Morn after morn across the frozen
sward,
A tiny songster comes, with humble
guise
And timid footsteps—asking charity.
For uninvited guest tho' it may be,
A daily banquet of the fair white food
Is made a daily welcome; and when
frost
And snow have vanished, will, in sweet
return,
Repay me with a song of grateful joy
From some green tree above me.
Little bird

Of sombre plumage and the crimson
breast!
'Tis something more than pity for thy
state

Of winter poverty and biting cold,
That warms my heart, and bids me suc-
cour thee;
For through the mem'ries of a bygone
time

There comes a story fraught with ten-
der pain—
Of how the darkening shadows fell on
earth,

(Which veiled her face that none might
see her shame.)

When One upon a cross laid down His
life.

The agonies of death grew damp and
chill,

The twining thorns and rankling nails
pierced deep.

And not a single hand would give Him
ease.

The men with hearts and souls were
stone, and mocked

At misery so human—but there came
A tiny bird, as if sent down from Hea-
ven,

To show that all creation was not dead
To sympathy.

No eye but One could note
How tenderly the little messenger

Withdrew a thorn from out the wounded
brow,

Or how it strove to pluck the cruel nails
Which tore the sacred flesh—but all in
vain!

But on that smooth brown breast which
warmly glowed

With indignation at the scornful crowd,
A drop of crimson fell, and with it set
The stamp of God's approval.

Ever since,
(Tis thus the legend runs,) that rosy
hue

Has marked the bird as holy—teaching
us

A lesson—how the weak and feeble
things

Which walk the earth in silence, oft are
made

The ministers of good, and soon or late
Win their best recompense—a Saviour's
blood—

Which seals them His.

But woe to those
Whose thrice repeated sins weave triple
crowns,

And strike that loving heart with deeper
pain

Than any nails His hands—who "put
to shame

And crucify, the Son of God afresh."

MARGARET HOUSMAN.

ARCHBISHOP USHER.

DIED 1655-6. AGED 76.

James Usher was the pious and
learned Archbishop of Armagh. A very
interesting life of this excellent man
was originally written by his friend and
chaplain, Dr. Richard Parr. Another
has been recently presented to us by the
Rev. R. B. Hone, Prebendary of Wor-
cester. From their statements we col-
lect the following particulars.

Only a few weeks after his arrival at
St. Donat's Castle, whither he went for
protection after the defeat of the armies
of King Charles the First, his studies
were interrupted by a dangerous illness,
in which a violent bleeding so exhausted

his frame, that the physicians des-
paired of his life, when he appeared

Waiting his summons to the sky,
Content to live, but not afraid to die.

Whilst he was in the midst of his pain,
as also his bleeding, he was still patient,
praising God, and resigning himself up
to His will, and giving all those about
him, or that came to visit him, excel-
lent heavenly advice to a holy life, and
due preparation for death ere its
agonies seized them. "It is a dangerous
thing," he said, "to leave all undone till
our last sickness; I fear a death-bed
repentance will avail us little, if we
have lived vainly and viciously, and
neglected our conversion till we can sin
no longer." Thus he exhorted all to fear
God, and love and obey the Lord Jesus
Christ, and to live a holy life. "And
then," said he, "you will find the com-
fort of it at your death, and your change
will be happy!"

But God had some further work for
him to perform, and was pleased by de-
grees to restore him to his former health
and strength.

About the middle of February, 1655,
he went to the Priory at Ryegate, the
seat of his patron, the Countess of
Peterborough, taking his last leave of
his friends and relations, who never
had the happiness to see him again.
He was now very aged, and though both
his body and mind were healthy and
vigorous for a man of his years, yet his
eyesight was extremely decayed by his
constant studying, so that he could
scarcely see to write but at a window,
and that in the sunshine, which he
constantly followed in, clear days from
one window to another. He had now
frequent thoughts of his dissolution;
and as he was wont, every year, to note
in his almanack, over against the
day of his birth the year of his
age, so in this year 1655, this note was
found written in his own hand, "Now
aged 75 years, my days are full." And
presently after in capital letters, "RE-
SIGNATION:" from which we may
gather, that he now thought the day of
his pilgrimage to be fulfilled, and that
he now resigned up himself to God's
will and pleasure.

Not long before his death, going to
Ryegate, I (writes the narrator) preached
a sermon there, where this good bishop
was present; after church he was
pleased to confer with me in private,
(as it was usual with him so to do,) and
he spake to this effect: "I thank you
for your sermon. I am going out of this
world, and I now desire, according to
your text, (Col. iii. 2,) to seek those
things which are above, where Christ
sitteth on the right hand of God, and to
be with Him in Heaven, of which,"
said he, "we ought not to doubt, if we
can evidence to ourselves our conver-
sion, true faith, and charity, and live in
the exercise of those true graces and
virtues with perseverance; mortifying
daily our inbred corruptions, renouncing
all ungodliness, and worldly lusts; and
he that is arrived at this habitual frame
and holy course is the blessed and hap-
py man, and may rejoice in hope of a
glorious eternity in the kingdom of
Heaven, to receive that inheritance
given by God to those that are sancti-
fied."

So that all his discourse was of heav-
enly things, as if his better part had
been there already, freed from the body
and all terrene affections; and he
seemed as if he were seriously consider-
ing his spiritual state, and making
ready for his departure, which he now
shortly expected. But since it had
been usual with him to insist on things
of this nature when we were together,
and that he was at this time in health,
I did not believe that his change was so
near as he presaged; yet he himself
had other thoughts, and it proved that
he was not mistaken; for on the 20th
March, (the day he fell sick,) after he
had been most part of it, as long as he
had light, at his study, he went from
thence to visit a gentlewoman then sick
in the house, giving her most excellent
preparatives for death, together with
other holy advice, for almost an hour,

and that in such a heavenly manner, as
if, like Moses upon Mount Pisgah, he
had then a prospect of the celestial
Canaan.

Next morning early he complained of
a great pain in his side; a physician
being sent for prescribed what he
thought convenient in the case; but it
could not thereby be removed, but
rather increased more and more upon
him, which he bore with great patience
for thirteen and fourteen hours; but
his strength and spirits decaying, he
wholly applied himself to prayer, and
therein had the assistance of the coun-
tess's chaplain. Upon some abatement
of the torture, he advised those about
him to provide for death in the time of
health, that then they might have
nothing else to do but to die. Then
taking his leave of the Countess of
Peterborough, by whom he had been so
long and kindly entertained, and giving
her thanks for all her kindness to him,
with excellent spiritual counsel as a re-
turn for all her favours, he desired to
be left to his own private devotions.
After which, the last words he was
heard to utter, (about one o'clock in the
afternoon,) praying for forgiveness of
sins, were these: "O Lord, forgive me,
especially my sins of omission." So
presently after this, in sure hopes of a
glorious immortality, he fell asleep, to
the great grief and affliction of the said
countess, who could never sufficiently
lament her own and the Church's great
loss, by his too sudden departure out of
this life.

Thus died this humble and holy man,
praying for his sins of omission, who
was never known to omit his duty, or
scarce to have let any time slip wherein
he was not employed in some good action
or other.

There is no state of mind more fre-
quently to be observed in sickness, nor
any more carefully to be guarded
against, than that of the Pharisee, who
said, "God, I thank thee, that I am not
as other men are." Whereas, if we
looked, as did Archbishop Usher, to our
"sins of omission," without going any fur-
ther in the work of self-examination, we
should see enough to humble our notions
of self-righteousness, to show the need
of a deep repentance, and to constrain
us to seek pardon through the merits of
Christ Jesus.

CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE IN
WESTERN AFRICA.

BY A LATE MISSIONARY.

Sierra Leone, "the white man's
grave," as it was long called, has few
attractions for Europeans even now, al-
though cultivation, drainage, and other
improvements have rendered the climate
healthy compared with what it once
was. But Sierra Leone, even in its worst
condition, strongly attracted the interest
and sympathies of earnest Christian and
philanthropic men seventy or eighty
years ago.

When England first awoke to a sense
of the iniquity of the slave trade, in
which she, at one time, was as actively
engaged as any other nation, her efforts
were directed to stop the export of
slaves from the western coast of Africa.
It was made penal for any Englishman
to engage in the slave trade; treaties
were entered into with other countries
to suppress it, and men-of-war were sta-
tioned to watch the coasts, capture slave
ships, and liberate the slaves. It would,
however, have been useless to land them
on any part of the coast not under Bri-
tish rule, as they would only have been
captured and enslaved again, and there-
fore the colony of Sierra Leone became
the place of refuge for them.

Sierra Leone consists of a tract of
country on the west coast of Africa,
about thirty miles long by fifteen broad,
running out, as a promontory, beyond
the adjacent country, bounded on the
north by the broad estuary of the Sierra
Leone river, and on the south by a bay
called Yawry Bay. It was acquired as
a British possession early in the present
century, and the first settlers in it were

a number of runaway slaves, from differ-
ent countries, who had escaped from
bondage, and were knocking about the
streets of London and other large
towns, much in the same destitute con-
dition as those natives of the East who
are now sometimes seen begging or
sweeping crossings.

Men like William Wilberforce, Gran-
ville Sharp, Macaulay (father of the
great historian), Sir F. Buxton, and
others, who had brought about the abo-
lition of slavery, and who took so much
interest in the African people, were also
among the chief promoters of the great
missionary societies formed at the be-
ginning of this century. It was greatly
through their influence that one of the
principal of these societies—the Church
Missionary Society—directed its efforts
to the liberated slave population of Sierra
Leone. The field was not an inviting
one, but the very wretchedness of the
people, together with the strong feeling
entertained that England owed some
amends to the sons and daughters of
Africa for wrongs inflicted upon them
by the slave trade, led to its being adopt-
ed.

The difficulties which had to be en-
countered in undertaking such a work
were by no means light. Foremost
among them was the deadly nature of
the climate. So bad was it—in the
earlier days of the mission—that during
the first twenty years no less than fifty-
three agents of the Church Missionary
Society (missionaries and missionaries'
wives) laid down their lives in the
cause; while a very large number of
others had to return to Europe in bro-
ken health. The unhealthiness of the
climate, however, was not the only dif-
ficulty; the state of the people them-
selves was such as might well have led
those who first went to labour among
them to shrink back from the work they
had undertaken as a hopeless task. The
liberated slaves came from many differ-
ent countries and tribes of the interior.
Representatives of more than one hun-
dred different nations were found
amongst them, each speaking a differ-
ent language or dialect, and all alike
reduced by privations and ill-treatment
to the most abject state of wretchedness
and misery, both of mind and body.
How best to deal with such a diverse
mass of uncivilized humanity must have
been a perplexing problem. The men
and women who undertook the work
were not, however, such as would be
easily turned from it. They were ready
to lay down their lives, if need be, for
the sake of their Lord and Saviour; and
actuated by the highest motive that can
actuate men, the love of His name, no
lesser difficulty was likely to stay their
efforts.

To learn all the different languages
spoken by the liberated slaves was ut-
terly impossible; the first missionaries
in Sierra Leone were therefore compen-
sated to adopt English as the common
language. Patiently they set to work
to impart some knowledge of it to their
unpromising charges, that so they might
be able to instil a few Christian ideas
into their dark minds. Adult classes
were formed, schools established for the
children, and so, by degrees, a really in-
telligent community was formed. The
schools proved a special help towards
this, as the children educated in them
contributed not a little to the enlighten-
ment of their elders. It was long, how-
ever, before any very marked effect was
produced upon the mass of the people.
As in all similar efforts, the sowing had
to go before the growing and reaping
time. Christian efforts were patiently
and persistently carried on year after
year, and those efforts were nobly sec-
onded by the Government of that day,
which liberally aided the schools, gave
land on which to settle the liberated
slaves, and granted money towards their
support, till they were able to maintain
themselves by their own labour; but
progress was gradual, and results had
to be waited for; yet they came in due
time.

After some years of persevering labour
and effort the effects began to appear.
Slowly but surely heathen notions were