

Reviews.

THE GOOD CHILD'S LIBRARY. Philadelphia, Hogan & Thompson. Toronto, Depository of the Church Society.

We have not for many a day met with a series of juvenile books, with which we have been so much pleased, as that now before us. They consist of lives of our blessed Redeemer and his Apostles, in simple verse. The style, though familiar, is far from childish, and the volumes are adorned with appropriate engravings tastefully executed in colours. When we add, that the price of the work, done up in fancy boards, is only one shilling and sixpence, we cannot question that a large demand will speedily be created for these excellent and fascinating little quartos.

BLACKWOOD'S EDINBURGH MAGAZINE. June, 1851. Toronto, T. Maclear.

This is a fair average number of *Ebony*. The article on "Æschylus, Shakspeare, and Schiller," contains some sparkling, if not very profound criticism, and is exceedingly readable. "My novel" still drags its slow length along. The clever articles entitled "Modern State Trials," are brought to a conclusion, to the regret, we doubt not, of many as well as ourselves; and the number is wound up with a scorching but truthful paper, styled "The Experiences of Free Trade."

ADDRESS ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY. By Paulo Brown, Hamilton. 1851.

Though written in a tone overly inflated, this pamphlet displays some ability, and will be perused with interest, as coming from the pen of a man of colour. It is pleasing to notice indications of mental culture, and intellectual development amongst the ill-fated children of Africa, and we trust that the present essay will meet with extensive patronage.

SCENES IN OUR PARISH.

NO. I.
AN OLD COUPLE.

John Anderson! my Jo! John! I we climb'd the hill together,
And many a canny day, John! we had with ane another;
Now we maun totter down, John! but hand in hand we'll go,
And we'll sleep together at the foot, John Anderson! my Jo!

BURNS.

Perhaps in times so prolific as the present, in all that genius and fancy produce, gorgeous or lovely, the very simplicity of an unadorned story like mine, may render it valuable by way of contrast—as the green leaves of the jessamine, themselves scentless and unvarnished, render

"More conspicuous, and illumine more
The bright profusion of her scattered stars."

Thus much I have said, I suppose, by way of apology for my boldness in attempting to write at all; and now I will go on to my tale.

The old man, for whom the prayers of the congregation were desired last Sunday, we missed from his seat in the aisle, only when illness (his last illness certainly it will be) confined him to his bed; and until then, in fair or foul weather, sunshine or shower, as regularly as Sunday came, you were sure to see blind Samuel feeling his way, up the rough lane and across the green, to the half opened church-yard gate. Latterly, indeed, he came with very feeble steps, and but for the good-natured, though rather rough assistance of some of our school-boys, would sometimes perhaps have been obliged to stop short of his journey's end; but his inoffensive and orderly conduct made him a general favourite; and when once he was within the church, many a friendly hand was willingly offered to lead him round the corner, and up to his accustomed seat; for, in a Christian congregation, how could it be otherwise?—every one was interested for the poor old man; they saw that he was weak and blind, and they knew that he was childless. He had no decent countryman for a son, on whose arm he might lean; no neat, gentle daughter; not even one little rosy grand child, just old enough to be trusted to "lead grandfather to church, and to sit quiet till it was time to lead him back again."—No! poor Samuel came alone. It was his old wife's pleasure, and nearly her whole business on Saturday, to provide for his decent appearance at church. His blindness prevented him from knowing how many necessities she wanted herself, but he always had a pair of warm worsted stockings, clean and thoroughly mended; and one of his two shirts (for his wardrobe could boast no larger supply) was always made ready on Saturday: and early on Sunday morning, she brought down from the carved chest, where they are deposited, as carefully as if they were last year's purchases, his curious chintz waistcoat with long sleeves—I never saw but this one of the sort—and his blue coat with very large buttons, which my reader may suppose is a curiosity too, for it was bought more than eight-and-forty years ago. And Hester used to be well pleased when she brushed it to see how decent her old man—so she generally calls him—looked in it still; but as she reached him the oaken stick which had been his companion for many years, it has grieved her to think, that blind and feeble as he was, he could have no other support and guide; and she often wept, as she opened the hatch to him and wished him a blessing on his way,

that her own still greater infirmities prevented her from accompanying him: labor and trouble have bowed her down, so that, like the woman in the gospel, "she can in no wise lift up herself." But she has fulfilled her duty to him well, and her pleasant task is almost done. He will come up to church no more, as she told me the other day, till he is carried thither; and in the meantime, though grace may be given him to show, as the poet and philosopher did, "in what peace a Christian can die," there are sad hours of wasting and weariness for him to undergo, and very heavy days of toil and watching; and I am afraid, notwithstanding the parish allowance, and the kindness of friends—of want and privation for poor Hester.

But allow me to fancy that you are accompanying me in my walk, my kind reader, and as we go along I will tell you some particulars of their simple story. We will turn down this lane, then on the north side of the church. I am told that this is not a pleasant walk, and I believe it, for those who have told me so are judges; yet if we go out in a mood to be pleased, we generally find something to admire, and I at least—for I am not very wise—always find much to wonder at.

Stop one moment, before we descend the hill. What a lovely gleam of autumn sunshine bursts across the opposite woods! How distinctly the beautiful forms of the old trees are outlined, and what a splendid variety of tint and shadowing there is still exhibited, even at this late period of the year! O there are lovely walks in these woods! The purest streams, the most luxuriant and picturesque foliage I ever saw. But they do not need my admiration; Bird and Danby have lingered amongst those valleys, and they have immortalised them. As we descend the hill, however, we lose the distant prospect; and the near view, at first sight offers nothing by way of compensation. If it were April, instead of November, we might gather plenty of primroses in the willow-bed, on the right hand side. They grow amongst the gnarled and mossy roots there by hundreds and thousands; and I observe it, because I scarcely ever gathered one in any part of the parish beside. Nay, I believe not one solitary straggler ever had the curiosity or the boldness to creep through the hedge to the other side. I cannot at all account for it; the soil appears just the same, and there is the same proportion of shade and sunshine, I should think; so this is one of the things I wonder at.—Earlier in the season we may make a very fair nosegay here of the May flower, and dog-roses, and golden cups; the blue blossom of the profuse and balmy ground ivy; and that most lovely of all wild flowers, the white major convolvulus, with its broad green leaves and spiry tendrils, and its blossom as pure as sunshine on white marble, that raises itself so loftily to the notice of the morning traveller, and is folded and withered when he passes again at evening, as if it was created for the very purpose of whispering to the gale that passes us, "Man that is born of a woman so cometh up and is so cut down." But now the last festoon of its wreathed leaves is sear and yellow, and the rest of the flowers, have almost all left us, but there are some lingering hawk's eye daisies and autumn starwort; and there is the vervain, which the "Naturalist," in his interesting "Journal," tells us used to be sacred; and there is one, and only one blossom of that little bright, elegant flower, the cinque-foil, whose very name speaks to us of the heraldry of old times and of its consequence in days that are gone; and yet it smiles there with perfect content, from its lowly bed of moss, and truly, well it may; it never was emblazoned on a fairer field.

Now we will walk more slowly. We have passed the low willow-bed, and are beginning again to ascend the hill. Look across the fields—the ground is very irregular here, but you see that it slopes gradually upward, till at the top the hill is crowned by a group of low huts, which, humble as they are, yet rise above the stunted and shattered oaks and elms, by which they are surrounded.—That place is called the Holms; perhaps because there are remains of many trees and hedges of holm or holly. At least this derivation may serve us until we can find a better. The trees which crest that little point of upland, are indeed scarcely deserving the name, yet we will look with reverence on them; they are the last descendants of a noble race, for once

"This was a forest, and a fayre forest;
In it grew many a seemly tree."

Yes; this was indeed one of the king's woods.—A little further away, toward the North-east, you can discover the white gable ends of an old house. It really looks very pretty, peeping through its grove of poplar and chestnut trees. The eminence on which it is built, commands an extensive view of the surrounding country. On that spot lived the keeper of the Royal chase, and it is still called the Lodge. About half a mile to the left, king John is said to have built a hunting seat, and this very place once echoed with the sound of the bugle horn, and the cry of the staunch hounds, and the shout of the hunters. We cannot, certainly, look round us without feeling that the days of romance and chivalry are utterly past; yet though one is long in coming to the conclusion, and longer still before one chooses to own it, what is lost in

romance is generally gained in comfort. To be sure, the country is said to be, from several causes, in a distressed and alarming state. I am no politician, but as an English Christian, "my fathers have declared to me the noble works that our God has done for us in the days of old," and I believe he "will yet arise and deliver us for his honour." In the mean time, whilst I feel very sorry for the distresses of my countrymen in other countries, I am yet bound to be thankful that this parish, though very poor, is not particularly agitated by the commercial troubles of the times. It is not a manufacturing district; and as yet those who are prudent and industrious have been enabled, generally speaking, to escape abject poverty.

There are some, however, the little history of whose days seems but one scene of loss and disappointment; and the lives of the poor old couple, of whom I spoke are of the number. When they first married, Samuel undertook to supply an extensive factory with coal, and it became necessary for him to purchase a wagon and a team of horses. It was not pleasant, certainly, to go into debt to so large an amount, at the first outset; but he had no choice. It had been his father's business, and was the only one which he understood. The wagon cost more than £40, but the benevolent wheelwright agreed to receive the payment by instalments. The horses—you must not suppose them in very high condition—were paid for immediately, and scarcely paid for, when first one and then another became diseased and died. This was the beginning of troubles. In the mean time Hester met with an accident, which was the immediate occasion of an expensive and distressing illness,—and from the effects of which she never recovered. If my story was not fact, I should fear the charge of improbability in thus heaping misfortune on misfortune; but mine is "an over true tale." About this time, too, Samuel's sight, always weak, failed so fast that it became necessary for him to procure the assistance of a driver for his wagon. Then his heart began to sink, as he has often told me, and the climax of his sentence at this point used always to be, "Then the third horse was dead, and the fourth was dying, and Hetty was bad too!"

Even these heavy and continued expenses might however have been borne, but, suddenly, the concern for which he was engaged, failed, throwing him, with many others, into a state of great distress. What was to be done? They were not genteel enough to think of the King's Bench. Their principle of honor—do not smile, my dear reader, at the idea of a collier's honour—and their standard of morality, were very high. They were *His* servants who has said, "Owe no man anything;" and by his grace they kept his commandment. Every thing—it was but very little—that was not absolutely necessary, was sold; and their best clothes pledged; "for those," said Hester, "have no right to wear good clothes who owe so much as we did then." There are some gay parties, in very high circles, I believe, that would cut rather a shabby figure if poor Hester's maxim were zealously enforced. Their clothes remained unredeemed for fifteen years. Their landlord took the wagon—then much the worse for the wear and tear of some years—as payment for rent; and Hester went round to the other creditors, (the whole of whose demands together amounted nearly to £100,) telling them simply the state of her affairs, and begging them to have patience until she could pay all. Her husband was now blind, but he could feel his way to and from town, with the produce of the little garden which Hester cultivated; and he managed to assist her in many ways, in the business in which she was particularly skilful, that of rearing calves, pigs, and rabbits. It was as a dealer in the last mentioned pretty creatures, those favorites of all children—to their misfortune, poor little things, it is that they are so—that I, then a child became first acquainted with her. They told me of losses and disappointments which would make my story too long; suffice it to say, that by constant exertion and strict self-denial, notwithstanding Samuel's blindness and Hester's frequent illness, their debts were all paid at the end of twenty-four years of hard labour, which had brought on premature old age.

During the twenty-four years of toil Hester had very great troubles of another sort. Of her seven sons not one survived the hour of his birth. How great a grief and how bitter a disappointment this was, year after year, a woman's weak pen cannot tell; but no woman needs to be told. "And now," said this childless mother to me, and she wept bitterly at this part of the story, "there's not one to carry home father, not one to carry home mother."

The great debt, as I said, was paid, but the years which it had taken to discharge it, had borne, as they flew, health and strength, and hope, away with them; and their daily bread was to be earned by the sweat of furrowed and aching brows, and the labour of enfeebled hands. But straitened as they have oftentimes been, for the mere necessities of life, they have always found "man's extremity God's opportunity;" to them the promise has been fulfilled, "Bread shall be given thee, and water shall be sure."

Their habits of industry and cleanliness prevent-

ed their only lower apartment from displaying that air of wretchedness which great poverty too often but not necessarily, assumes; and why should we wonder at it? "Godliness is profitable for all things." To be sure they are obliged to keep a curious assortment of articles—kettles and pans, an empty rabbit hutch, now used as a cupboard, and a barrel of grain for the pig, all ranged along one side of their sitting-room: but the deal table is white and clean, and the few chairs almost bright, and the cups and plates are arranged in seemly order along the shelf; at one corner of which, carefully folded up, like a treasure of known value, lies their bible; and whoever would read them a chapter from that blessed book, needed no other recommendation to make him a welcome visitor.

It was curious to observe in what different ways their sincere and humble attention used to be displayed. Hester's could express itself in many tears and earnest exclamations. But Samuel seldom spoke or moved from the moment when, as the reading began, he reverently laid aside his round collier's hat, until when, as is ended, he quietly resumed it with some expression of assent to what he had heard:—"Ah! that's what we want."—"That's what I told Hetty." And often when it has been a chapter of promise, I have heard him say, slowly, as if the experiences of long years were passing in review across his mind, to prove the truth of it, "Aye, the Lord will provide!" Such, indeed, was the last connected sentence I ever heard him utter. His present illness came on with sudden violence, and has already lasted many weeks; and Hester, bowed down by poverty and disease, and reduced by anxiety and toil to great weakness of body and mind, was crying bitterly at the idea that the parish must bury him. He made a strong effort to speak, and at last said, "She ought not to do so, the Lord has provided for me." And He has provided. Notwithstanding their poverty, I really believe the old man has wanted for nothing during his long illness, and Hester, throughout that time has waited on him with the most unremitting attention, and the most sincere affection. I do not mean to say that her neighbors are less friendly than most other poor neighbours; but they have their own troubles to think of; their own pressing necessities to provide for; and though they may have the inclination, they certainly have not found opportunity to give her much assistance. She has risen before daylight, and laboured hard all day, to keep things in decent order, and to provide her dying husband with every comfort which was possible; and she has watched alone with him through the long night. But nature cannot bear long what that poor old man has borne so patiently. It must be over soon. There! we are come in sight of the humble dwelling, which he has inhabited so long, and from which he will soon be borne forth to return no more.

We will not go any further, for the path here is very rough and miry. I cannot think how old Hester will manage to come up this steep lane at the funeral. She will try, I know; for the poor, I am happy to say, still think that friends and relations are those who ought to see the dear form that has been loved in life, laid at rest in its holy grave; and certainly it must have been for the comfort of the sorrowing friends, and not for those hirelings who have nothing of mourners but the name, that the beautiful and most comfortable service of our Church was composed. Poor old woman! it will be a weary walk for her, to be sure, but then one, at least, of that faithful pair will, for the first time for many years, be no longer a subject of pity; for "blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

The weather is altered very much since we were together last; it is no longer mild autumn, but cold, and dark, and gloomy—altogether winter.—The frost, a few nights since, entirely stripped the trees, and now we distinguish them not by the variety of dark foliage, but the varied character of the dark branches. And what beauty there is in those forms yet! How reverend and even noble the old chestnut looks, that almost hides the east window of the church; and with what perfect elegance that tall and fragile birch tree rises beside it! How gracefully all the leafless branches bow together, as the wind sweeps across them; and with what an air of joy they all rise again together when the gust is past! That elastic spring is indeed the only thing that wears any appearance of joy this evening. It is so cold that the lauristinus flowers keep themselves wrapt up in their red foldings, and show no more intention of opening than they did a month ago. The Michaelmas daisies were entirely withered, and they are cut down, and the few marigolds, small and single, and wet and pale, linger alone, along the littered border and tremble at the cold evening gale, as if they dreaded another hailstorm; and indeed the heavy gray clouds, and the sighing of the wind, foretell a stormy night.

Hark! there is a sound fit for such an evening. The bell is tolling for a funeral. It is old Samuel's. That knell has a solemn, but now a melancholy sound. Come through the gate, to the corner of the church, and we shall see the humble procession pass. Ah! the beautiful service is begun. I know the comforting words well, and the voice which utters them. How deep and musical it is!