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Poetry.

LINES BY MILTON IN HIS OLD AGE.

This sublime and affecting production was but lately discovered among the remains of our great epic poet, and is published in the recent Oxford edition of Milton's Works.

I am old and blind!
Men print at me as smitten by God's frown;
Afflicted and deserted of my kind;
Yet I am not cast down.

I am weak, yet strong;
I murmur not that I no longer see;
Poor, of all, an I helpless, I the more belong,
Father Supreme! to Thee.

O merciful One!
When men are farthest, then Thou art most near,
When friends pass by, my weakness slum,
Thy chariot I hear.

Thy glorious face
Is leaning towards me; and its holy light
Shines in upon my lonely dwelling place,
And there is no more night.

On my bended knee
I recognise Thy purpose, clearly shown;
My vision Thou hast dimm'd that I may see
Thyself—Thyself alone.

I have naught to fear;
This darkness is the shadow of Thy wing;
Beneath it I am almost sacred, here
Can come no evil thing.

O! I seem to stand
Trembling, where foot of mortal ne'er hath been,
Wrapp'd in the radiance of Thy sinless Land,
Which eye hath never seen.

Visions come and go;
Shapes of resplendent beauty round me throng;
From angel lips I seem to hear the flow
Of soft and holy song.

It is nothing now,
When heaven is opening on my sightless eyes—
When arcs from paradise refresh my brow
The earth in darkness lies.

In a purer clime
My being fills with rapture—waves of thought
Roll upon my spirit—strains sublime
Break over me unthought.

Give me now my lyre!
I feel the stirrings of a gift divine,
Within my bosom glows unceasing fire
Lit by no skill of mine.

Christian Miscellany.

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

A Holy Ministry and Membership.

It has often been a subject of wonder that, in a church holding the doctrine of entire sanctification in this life, few among our ministers and members profess to enjoy this state of grace. Though occupying a humble place among my brethren, I have not been a careless observer of the state of religious enjoyment in the church. And I here record what has long been a matter of grief to me, that among the ministry and membership with which I have become acquainted, but a very small minority have professed to enjoy the blessing of perfect love; and but very few have appeared to be earnestly seeking it. Why is this? Is it because it is a matter of indifference whether we have a holy ministry and membership or not?—Surely this is not the case. Is not this doctrine as important as repentance and justification by faith, upon which we dwell so frequently? Did not the Apostle labour to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus;" and did not our fathers glory in the doctrine? The Lord pardon us in this thing. And is not holiness of heart necessary to make us good pastors? How can we go into every house in order and teach every one in them to be Christians,—how can we bear the insults and wickedness of the ungodly, and the stupidity and indifference of many professors, unless we are saved from all pride and impatience? And how can we sympathize properly with the ignorant,

the poor and afflicted, and "yearn after them all in the bowels of Christ," unless our hearts are overflowing with love? And how shall we warn the rich, gay, and popular sinners—and they must be warned by some one, or go quickly down to hell—unless we have that holy boldness, which knows no man after the flesh? And how important that we of the ministry should enjoy holiness and profess it, for the encouragement of the membership. For if the preacher has entered into its blessed enjoyment, and describes it clearly, how confidently can he invite his flock to be partakers of like precious faith; and what a powerful influence his example and precept will have upon them.

And is it not a matter of the greatest importance, that we have a holy membership? Does not the very constitution and discipline of the church require all her members to have all the graces which constitute holiness? And is it not the very purpose for which God hath raised up the Methodist Church, to spread scriptural holiness over these lands? The church requires her members to be zealous. And the souls that are holy will feel a burning zeal at all times for the glory of God. They will attend all the means of grace; they will feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and diligently follow every good work. The church requires her members to be liberal. And who are so liberal as those who have devoted their all to God? They will give to send the Gospel to the heathen, for they have felt its glorious effects upon their own hearts. They will give for the support of the ministers among them, for they "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." They will give to the poor, afflicted and distressed, for their hearts yearn with pity for them. If they have but two mites, like the poor widow in the Gospel, they will cast them into the treasury of the Lord, and pray the blessing of heaven upon them.—The church requires her members to be ardent in prayer. And the souls that are entirely sanctified will pray without ceasing. They will "cry between the porch and altar," saying, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach."—And their prayers will be the more successful, "For the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous (or holy) man availeth much." The church requires her members to have strong faith in God. And the souls that have entered into the rest of perfect love, believe every word that God has written. They claim the promises as their own, and doubt not but that they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. They believe that God is able to break the hardest heart, to humble the proudest sinner, to overcome all opposition. And if we all had this strong faith in God, Satan's kingdom would tremble, his bulwarks would tumble down, and the shout of victory would be heard throughout the length and breadth of the land.

We perceive, then, that holiness prepares us to fulfil all the requirements of the church. "Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good also." Let us, then, ministers and members, one and all, awake to the all-important subject, and let us ardently pray, and rest not till we see a general struggle in the church for entire holiness of heart and life. Then indeed will the church "look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Then shall the earth soon be "filled with the knowledge of the Lord."—*Cor. of Guide to Christian Perfection.*

Maturity of Grace.

Flavel, in his meditations on the harvest season, gives the following three signs of the maturity of grace:—

1. When the corn is near ripe, it bows the head, and stoops lower than when it was green. When the people of God are near ripe for heaven, they grow more humble and self-denying than in the days of their first

profession. The longer a saint grows in the world the better still he is acquainted with his own heart, and his obligations to God; both of which are very humbling things. Paul had one foot in heaven when he called himself the chiefest of sinners and least of saints. 1 Tim. i. 15; Eph. iii. 8. A Christian in the progress of his knowledge and grace is like a vessel cast into the sea—the more it fills the deeper it sinks.

2. When the harvest is nigh, the grain is more solid and pithy than ever it was before. Green corn is soft and spongy, but ripe corn is substantial and weighty. So it is with Christians; the affections of a young Christian, perhaps, are more fervorous and sprightly; but those of a grown Christian are more judicious and solid; their love to Christ abounds more and more in all judgment. Phil. i. 9. The limbs of a child are more active and pliable; but as he grows up to a more perfect state, the parts are more consolidated and firmly knit. The fingers of an old musician are not so nimble, but he hath a more judicious ear in music than in his youth.

3. When corn is dead ripe it is apt to fall of its own accord to the ground, and there shed; whereby it doth, as it were, anticipate the harvest man, and calls upon him to put in the sickle. Not unlike to which are the lookings and longings, the groaning and hastening of ready Christians to their expected glory. They hasten to the coming of the Lord, or, as Montanus more fitly renders it, they hasten the coming of the Lord; that is, they are urgent and instant in their desires and cries to hasten his coming; their desires sally forth to meet the Lord; they willingly take death by the hand; as the corn bends to the earth, so do these souls to heaven. This shows their harvest to be near.

Fatal Generosity.

The negro preachers at the South are often marked by great shrewdness and mother wit, and will not only point the truth, but barb it so, that, if once in, it will stick fast. One of these in Old Virginia was once descending with much earnestness on different ways in which men lose their souls.—Under one head of remark, he said that men often lose their souls through excessive generosity. "What?" he exclaimed, "you tell me you never heard of that before.—You say, ministers often tell us we lose our souls through excessive stinginess, and for being covetous; but who ever heard of a man that hurt himself by going too far the other way? I tell you how they do it.—They set down under the sermon, and when the preacher touch upon this or that sin, they no take it to themselves; but give this part of the sermon to one brother, and that part to another brother. And so they give away the whole sermon, and it do them no good. And that's the way they lose their souls by being too generous."

There is great truth in this remark. The want of a self-applying conscience causes much of the best of preaching to fall like rain upon a rock, from which it soon runs off; or if a little is caught in a hollow, it only stagnates, and then dries away, leaving no blessings behind. A sermon, however true and forcible, thus disposed of, does no good to those among whom it is so silently distributed, while it leaves him who squanders its treasures to perish at last, in the poverty and emptiness of his soul.

Dark Hours.

There are hours, dark hours, which mark the history of the brightest year. For not a whole month in any of the millions of the past, perhaps, has the sun shone brilliantly all the time. And there have been cold and stormy days in every year. And yet the mists and shadows of the darkest hours were dissipated, and flitted heedless away. The cruelest of the ice fetters have been broken and dissolved, and the most furious storm loses its power to harm.

And what a parable is all this of human life—of the inside world, where the heart works at its destined labours. Here, too, we have the overshadowings of dark hours, and many a cold blast chills the heart to its core. But what matters it? Man is born a hero, and it is only by darkness and storms that heroism gains its greatest and best development and illustration—then it kindles the black cloud into a blaze of glory, and the storm bears it more rapidly to its destiny. Despair not then. Never give up; while one good power is yours, use it. Disappointment will be realized. Mortifying failure may attend this effort and that one—but only be honest, and struggle on, and it will work well.

Man's Dignity.

I thank my Maker that I was not created an angel; for if I had been, right sure am I that, left to myself, I should have been among the fallen. I give him praise that I am a native of this favoured earth; that I occupy a place on the soil consecrated by the mission of patriarchs and prophets, and the greater mission of his Son; and that I belong to this habitable earth, where "his delights are with the sons of men;" that I live in a world where that Incarnate One first drew his infant breath, and where one of Adam's daughters called him Son!—Here lies man's dignity, that his nature has been thus associated with Deity. He belongs to the earth the Saviour trod upon, and which was vocal with his prayers, and wet with his tears and blood. And if a believer in Jesus, he is one with that redeemed humanity, in which, from the eternity past to the coming eternity, this Redeemer takes such a joyous interest, and of which he is the accredited, honoured, adored representative in the Court of Heaven.—*Dr. G. Spring.*

The Germ of Greatness.

Faith, that is to say, in all possible spheres the vision of the invisible, and the absent brought nigh, is the energy of the soul and the energy of life. We do not go too far in saying that it is the point of departure for all action: since to act is to quit the firm position of the present, and stretch the hand into the future. But this, at least, is certain, that faith is the source of everything in the eyes of man, which bears a character of dignity and force. Vulgar souls wish to see, to touch, to grasp; others have the eye of faith, and they are great. It is always by having faith in others, in themselves, in duty, or in Divinity, that men have done great things. Faith has been, in all times the strength of the feeble, the salvation of the miserable. In great crises, in great exigencies, the favourable chance has always been for him who hoped against hope. And the greatness of individuals and of nations, may be measured precisely by the greatness of their faith.—*Vinet.*

Strangers and Sojourners.

Am I a stranger and a sojourner with God? Let me realize, let me exemplify the condition. Let me look for the treatment such characters commonly meet with. Like widows and orphans, they are often imposed upon, and wronged, and injured.—They are turned into ridicule and reproach, because of their speech; their dress, their manners and usages. And Christians are a peculiar people. They are men wondered at. The Saviour tells them not to marvel if the world hates them, for they are not of the world, as He is not of the world. This treatment, is, in reality, a privilege, rather than a matter of complaint. It is when I am admired and caressed, and I find everything agreeable in my circumstances, it is then I feel something like a settler. But the disadvantages of my state make me think of home, because this is not my rest.—*Jay.*