

THE CANADIAN FAMILY HERALD.

FIVE SHILLINGS PER ANNUM.]

Virtue is True Happiness.

[SINGLE, THREE HALF PENCE.

VOL. I.

TORONTO, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1852.

No. 10.

Poetry.

MY BIRTHDAY.

BY THOMAS MOORE.

"My birthday"—what a different sound
That word had in my youthful ears!
And how, each time the day comes round,
Less and less white its mark appears!

When first our scanty years are told,
It seems like pastime to grow old;
And, as Youth counts the shining links
That Time around him binds so fast,
Pleased with the task, he little thinks
How hard that chain will press at last.
Vain was the man, and false as vain,
Who said "were he ordained to run
His long career of life again.
He would do all that he had done."
Ah, 'tis not thus the voice that dwells
In sober birthdays, speaks to me;
Far otherwise—of time it tells,
Lavished unwisely, carelessly;
Of counsel mocked; of talents, made
Haply for high and pure designs,
But of, like Israel's incense, laid
Upon unholy earthy shrines;
Of nursing many a wrong desire;
Of wandering after Love too far,
And taking every meteor fire
That crossed my pathway for his star.
All this it tells; and, could I trace
Th' imperfect picture o'er again,
With power to add, retouch, efface
The lights and shades, the joy and pain,
How little of the past would stay!
How quickly all should melt away—
All—but that Freedom of the Mind,
Which hath been more than wealth to me;
True friendships, in my boyhood twin'd,
And kept till now unchangingly,
And that dear home, that smiling ark,
Where Love's true light at last I've found,
Cheering within, when all grows dark,
And comfortless, and stormy round!

Literature.

THE LOVERS' FIRST VISIT.

On the sunny side of a gently sloping upland there stood, some twenty years ago, an old square built, thatch-roofed farm house, where lived Anabella Gourlay, a young, beautiful maiden in the sweet, roseate bloom of seventeen summers. She was not tall, and rather inclined to be stout, face roundish rather inclined to be full, cheeks reddish inclined to be rosy, eyes light blue, and mild looking, teeth well set, and withal adorned with a profusion of dark auburn tresses. Miss Gourlay was born to affluence, and was nursed in the lap of affection; but through the inscrutable vicissitudes of fortune, she had retired from the scene of fashion and grandeur, with her only brother and a widowed mother, to live a rural life, far from the din and bustle of mechanical or commercial pursuits. Blithely did she milk the cows, or feed the poultry, or coll the hay, or flourish the sickle, or do any of the numberless little duties which belong to a small farm. But Anabella was not

"born to blush unseen"

She was dearly loved by a mild, amiable, though rather soft looking young man, who seemed at that time to have no definite aim in life, if that one was erased from his mind. And that love was sweetly reciprocated. But there were others who claimed a share in her affection, and among the rest, two young

lads, who lived in a little town some eight miles distant from the farm. These two youths set out one fine morning in December to pay a long promised visit to the farm, to see the lovely Anabella, and to spend a day with the family.

As nothing, in these days of degeneracy, is more necessary than the choice of good companions, it may be well before proceeding with these two youths on their excursion, to give the reader a sort of idea of the company to which he has been introduced, confident as I am, that a cursory glance at the aims and ennobling pursuits of these two young men, will enable the reader very speedily to come to the conclusion, that he is about to make an excursion with young men of high promise.

One was a mechanic, the other a gentleman. I will therefore start with the mechanic first, as I fully believe that until after the days of Nimrod, there were no gentlemen in the world. There was Jabal, the father of the tent-makers, and Jubal, the father of the organ-builders, and Tubal Cain, the father of the brass-founders; but strictly speaking there were no gentlemen, because prior to that time it would not have been safe to lie down in gentlemanly indolence, for fear of an attack from wild beasts. Thanks to that mighty hunter, men can now indulge in the most soporific listlessness, with impunity.

Well then, this mechanic,—or rather this son of a mechanic—some great men were once mechanics—well, this youth, was determined to be a great man, and the first daring effort of his genius was an attempt to make "spring swords." Startle not, gentle reader, he did not attempt to rival John Toledo,—his was a far higher aim. It happened in the process of events in this ever eventful world, that a certain Signor de Beston, a far-famed Indian juggler—by the way, this same said de Beston, was known to have been at one time a Dumfermline damask weaver, and had made his escape from the shuttle,—but be that as it may, this famed Indian juggler came to the town of Ardmorin, where our mechanical hero lived, and performed many striking feats, and among the rest was that of swallowing a sword. This was something new to the honest Ardmorinians, and many and sad were the conjectures as to where such uncanny looking arts would lead. Common report said that the man had connexion with the Evil One, and that his appearance was a sure presage of the last times when Gog and Magog were to be deceived and drawn forth to battle.

An old man-o'-wars-man, however, who seemed to be more acute than his neighbours, had picked up a nice little piece of wood with a knot-hole in it, about three-eighths of an inch in diameter. Through this the old tar looked, and saw as clear as day, that the juggler had only cast glaumer in their eyes.

But our youth took another view of the matter, and fully determined not to be done by anything that lay in the line of mechanics, went straightway to consult the parish minister about this wonderful affair. The minister as may be imagined was loth to think that

Satan could have power to infest a territory, in which he had himself laboured so abundantly, and was not long in hitting upon a solution of the mystery.

"The fact is, Samuel," said he,—by the bye, the young man's name was Samuel,— "the fact is, I have been thinking seriously of this subject ever since this mysterious stranger came to this neighbourhood, and I have come to the conclusion,—a conclusion by the way which I owe to my profound study of mathematics, and more particularly from having read Xenophon's 'History of the Wars,' in the original language, which I believe few are able to master so well;—and also from a meditative turn of mind, which ardent study has superinduced,—Well, I was saying that I have come to the conclusion, that it is a 'spring sword,' that is to say, it is a sword of such a construction, that while he presses the point of it upon his teeth, he touches a secret spring in the handle, which by the law of repulsion, forces from it the opposing substance, and while you imagine the sword goes down his throat, it only in obedience to this law coils itself up into the little handle, by the force of the spring. This I believe to be the true secret of the matter, and you know there are many things which we daily believe, though we cannot fully explain their causes. For example we see the daisy growing, but we cannot explain why it does not assume the appearance of a mushroom. So it is with this sword, although there does not seem in the handle—supposing it were hollowed out—space sufficient to contain half the length of the sword, yet we must believe that that is the process; for it would be a melancholy alternative, to give way to the popular belief that the Prince of Darkness was aiding the man to deceive us."

Considerably relieved by this philosophic explanation, the youth went away quite delighted and was not long in setting to work to make a "spring sword." The first one he made, he left the blade stiff enough to have the appearance of a sword, but then to make it coil up was impossible. He made another limber enough to coil itself up a little, but behold! it assumed the form of a watch main-spring. Something evidently was wrong, and to the unfolding of the mystery he was about to turn his sole attention, when a company of strolling players came to enliven the dulness of Ardmorin. Among that light hearted band was a young man who either in Sheffield or Brummagem, had learned to make cork-screws, but unfortunately he had an effervescence of eloquence which constantly bubbled forth like an exploding volcano, and he consequently left the forge to twist his figure in the diplays of his oratory, as he had been wont to twist his cork-screws.

This Othello, no doubt enquiring for the geniuses of the place, found his way to Samuel. He examined the swords but could not pronounce an opinion in reference to that sort of thing. He could however for a very slight consideration, instruct him how to make cork-screws.