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Poetry.

THE SONG OF THE YEAR.

3rd QUARTER, AUTUMN.

I come with a voice of thanksgiving and praise.
For the stores that so plentifully abound;
From a providence watchful and never unkind,
Nor ever unmindful is found;
I come richly laden with earth's richest fruits,
Now ripen'd by summer's warm suns;
To gladden the hearts and awaken the joy,
Of Earth's highly favor'd own sons.

Thou I bear on my cheek the darkened hue,
From the toil and the heat of the past;
With healthy firm step and a figure erect,
I shrink not from tempest or blast;
I come with rejoicing to join in the feast,
And the general joy to partake;
With the healthy blest sons of hardship and toil,
The glad song of joy to awake.

I sing of the stores heavenly kindness and love,
Have given to the sons of the soil;
And thankful to Him the giver of good,
For his blessing on labour and toil;
To Him by whose strength the toil was endured,
And the heat of the season now o'er;
And by whose tender care and watchful concern,
I am left still his grace to adore.

With the shout of wild pleasure and tribute of thanks,
Whose echo is heard o'er the plain;
The husbandman carefully houses his stores,
From exposure to tempest and rain;
Whilst gladness is beaming o'er each happy face,
And nature's sun widely to smile;
Let us join in beseeching the author of bliss,
Still to favour industrious toil.

In the circle of friendship and family love,
Let the note of thanksgiving be loud;
Nor let o'er the breathing of envy be heard,
At the lot of the wealthy and proud;
From palace to cottage, from mansion to hut,
Rejoicing and praise still abound;
And the hearts of mankind adoringly bow,
To Him from whom good can be found.

Let the leaf gently falling from yonder tall tree,
Teach the thoughtless and heedless to know;
That the autumn approaches with steps all astride,
That their gifts and their graces lay low;
That its gathering blasts and dark low'ring clouds,
Are pointing to mortals their lot;
That the giddy and careless now buoyant with life,
Must die and on earth be forgot.

Christian Miscellany.

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

The Joyful Surprise.

In the life of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, we are informed, that it was his custom to purchase for his children a picture or toy; and in order to give them a joyful surprise, to hide it in some place to which they had access, and which they were sure to visit. A shout of ecstasy would ring through the nursery when the discovery was made, and the father was richly repaid by witnessing their delight. The pleasure of a joyful surprise in more important matters, has doubtless, also been known to our readers in the course of their lives; some event, perhaps, coming at the moment when it was peculiarly acceptable and totally unexpected, has made the heart overflow with delight and rapture. In the dealings of his providence, God often orders events for his children, so as to give them a joyful surprise; when faith languishes, and the promise seems to tarry, then at a moment all unlooked for, the answer comes with a sweetness and unexpectedness that makes it all the more precious. How must Jacob of old have felt his joyful surprise when it was announced that Joseph yet lived, and was viceroy of Egypt? Or, to borrow an example from the thick field of modern instances, how must the heart of the late Legh Richmond have bounded with joy when, after mourning the death of his eldest son—in consequence, as was reported, of the loss of the vessel in which he

had sailed, with all its crew—news came that the young man was alive and well, having providentially remained behind, and escaped the disaster which had overwhelmed his comrades?

The incident which I am now about to narrate will illustrate, perhaps, even more pointedly than the preceding examples, the nature of a joyful surprise. It is founded on a fact which actually occurred in the manner here stated. May it serve to cheer the heart of some fainting labourer in the Lord's vineyard:—

In an English village, the name of which it is unnecessary for me to give, there dwelt, till lately, an old man whom I will call John Roberts. Although poor, he was rich in faith, and had acquired an influence which gold could not have bought. He was unwearied in doing good, and particularly that kind of it which consists in visiting and ministering to the sick. However infectious the disorder, John Roberts shrunk not from his errand of mercy. Where others quailed he went boldly forward, giving consolation to the dying believer, leading the penitent sinner away from dependence upon himself, to a trust on the crucified One.

Flesh and blood will sometimes shrink, however, and murmuringly imagine that no good is done, when no fruit is seen. After a course of usefulness, John Roberts was at one time disposed to grow weary and faint in his mind. How often does such a temptation beset the christian! How often does he think the precious seed lost, when it is but hid in the ground, ready to spring forth and fructify.

One evening, when betrayed into this state of mind, our hero (for does not such a man deserve the title?) was invited by a friend to call upon a sick man, in a neighbouring village. John half doubted the utility of his errand, but at last shook off the temptation. "I will go," he said to himself: "let us not be weary in well-doing; in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

Arrived at the village, he was not long in finding the place of his destination. It was an ordinary cottage, with a neat plot of garden-ground before it. On knocking, the door was opened by a respectable-looking woman, to whom John explained his errand.

"Come in, sir; he will be so happy to see you, I am sure. The doctor has just left, and has said that he cannot live out the night."

The sick man was found reclining on a bed, which, like the other furniture of the apartment, was plain, but at the same time scrupulously clean.

"My friend," said John, after a few kind inquiries of a general nature, "it is a solemn thing to lie as you now do, with the prospect of so soon going before a holy God, to give in an account of the deeds done in the body."

"Ay, ay, sir, it is a solemn thing," replied the dying man; "but 'I know in whom I have believed.'"

It was cheering to have such an answer; but John Roberts was not one to take things easily for granted. He knew that an apparently strong confidence sometimes rests on a sandy foundation, and that not every one that calls Christ "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven. The weakest faith that leans on the Saviour is preferable, it has been well said, to the strongest that leans on self. A few other questions, however, brought forth replies which showed that in this case, at least, the work was a genuine one. The poor invalid, convinced of sin, had fled as a penitent to the Saviour, and yielded himself up under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to his light and easy yoke.

"And how long," said the gratified visitor, "is it since you first knew the Lord?" "About twenty years ago. Ah, sir!" continued the sick man, turning his eyes full on the visitor, "my conversion was a wonderful one. It was wrought, do you know, by a miracle."

"A miracle!" said John; "all true conversions are miracles. It is as great a won-

der for a man dead in trespasses and sins to be born again by the Holy Ghost, as for a corpse to be brought to life."

"Ay, ay, sir," said the dying man, "that is very true; I don't mean that; mine was a real miracle; as much so as any in the Old or New Testament."

"Impossible, impossible, my friend," said John, incredulously; for he was now afraid that, after all, the invalid must have been resting on some delusion.

"You may think so at first, I dare say; but you won't, I am sure, when you have heard me out," rejoined the invalid. "About twenty years ago I was living a very ungodly life; I had no fear of God before my eyes. I was a burden to myself and others. I drank, I swore, and I profaned the Sabbath. It happened, however, that I was sent into a field to mow some hay. I had made an engagement in the evening to meet some companions in the ale-house, and have a night of folly. Well, as I was saying, I went into the field, and I took my dinner with me, for it was some distance to go home again. It was only some bread and cheese, for I was kept too poor by drinking to buy anything better. When I got to the field, I looked about for some place to put it in, and taking my handkerchief, I wrapped it up, and hid it in a hole in the hedge. There was nobody in the field but myself; of that I am quite sure. Well, dinner time came, and I went away to get out my bread and cheese. There was the bundle as I had left it. I opened it, all unconcerned, and inside, to my astonishment, lay a little tract. I could not believe my eyes at first; but there it was. I opened it, and read it, trembling all over as I did so. I knew that no one else had been in the field, or I must have seen him: God himself, must have sent some angel with it, I thought. So I read, and as I began to read it, it told me of my lost and sinful condition, and warned me to flee from the wrath to come. I fell down on my knees then and there, and prayed, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' I resolved that as he had sent down this tract to me, I would henceforth give myself to my Saviour, and lead a new life. I did not go to the ale-house that night you may be sure. It was long before I got any peace or hope; but at last I was able to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and was filled with joy and peace, and love. Ever since then, I have been, I trust, a new creature; and soon I hope to be with him, and praise him for all his mercies to me. Now, sir, was I not right in saying that my conversion was caused by a real miracle."

As he concluded, the old man looked at John Roberts. The countenance of the latter seemed strangely agitated by the narrative. "How long ago did you say it was since that happened?" he enquired.

"Twenty years ago, come Michaelmas next," said the old man.

"Was not the field called Ponder's Bush, and did it not belong to farmer Jones?" continued Roberts, in an eager voice.—"Praised be God! I can explain your miracle. That morning, I myself had gone out to walk along the footpath next that field, when I happened to see through the hedge a man in the neighbouring field, looking about as if he wanted to hide something. I was curious to know what it could be, thinking, at first, he had been doing something wrong; and, standing still, I watched till I saw where he put his bundle. On getting nearer I found it was only his dinner, and had a mind to leave it, and walk on. Having some tracts in my pocket, however, I said, 'It can do no harm to leave him one.' So I slipped in the tract and left it; for thought I, who knows but God may bless it to the man when he comes to read it?"

We must leave our readers to imagine the scene that followed; the tears of pleasure that ran down John's cheeks as he thus found the good seed returned to him after many days; the wondering and yet grateful feelings of the poor man as the mystery that so long had puzzled his simple intellect was

thus cleared up. He died shortly afterwards, filled with joy and peace in believing. John Roberts returned home, reanimated and encouraged in his work and labour of love, for he indeed had a joyful surprise.

The poor man's miracle was proved to be a matter of human agency; but one real miracle remained behind—that was his conversion. As his visitor observed, "For a man dead in trespasses and sins to be born again, is as great a miracle as for a corpse to be raised from the dead."

Reader! has this change passed upon you? If not, O read, pray, and ponder over the Saviour's words.—"Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

"Show thyself a Man!"

A man! That is just what religion would make you—just what the Bible would make you. Perhaps you do not think so. You may have imbibed that foolish and wicked notion that it is not manly to be a Christian—a Bible Christian. Many do—but look at some of the Bible Christians. Look at Abraham, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, and Daniel; were they not men? Look at Peter, and John, and Paul—all men—noble, manly specimens of humanity. You would see this if you would but study their characters. Well, the Bible will make you a man, if you will obey its requirements, and imitate its perfect pattern. It is eminently calculated, as well as expressly designed, to make us men—intellectually and morally men.

Be a man in your aims. Aim at something worthy of a man—a rational, accountable, and immortal man! If you do, you will aim at something higher than money, or worldly fame, or sensual pleasure. You will aim at holiness and heaven.

Be a man in your principles. Cherish a love for justice, truth, self-control, and benevolence. Be governed by them in all things. Swerve not from the right for any present advantage. In all circumstances show thyself a man by unflinching rectitude.

Be a man in understanding. The Bible enjoins it. You have a mind capable of vast expansion and improvement. Cultivate it. Whatever your social position, in our happy country you can hardly be placed in circumstances in which you cannot command the means of self-improvement.

Be a man in the daily business and intercourse of life. Never do a small thing—a mean act. Be noble, generous, open-hearted, and open-handed, in all your dealings with men. Don't be narrow-minded, prejudiced, and selfish. Respect the rights and feelings, and even the prejudices of others. You will do this if you are a Christian. A mean, tight-fisted, uncharitable, mulish Christian! It's a contradiction in terms!

Be a man in your judgement of other men. Do not let the quality of the coat, the colour of the skin, or the weight of the purse, determine your estimation of, and conduct towards him.

Be a man—a true man here, and you shall be a "king and a priest unto God" by-and-by!

We do not pray enough.

FELIX NEFF once made the following comparison: "When a pump is frequently used, but little pains are necessary to have water—the water pours out at the first stroke, because it is high; but if the pump has not been used for a long time, the water gets low; and when you want it you must pump it a long while, and the water comes only after great efforts. It is so with prayer; if we are instant in prayer, every little circumstance awakens a disposition to pray, and desires and words are always ready. But if we neglect prayer, it is difficult for us to pray; for the water in the well gets low."