

Poetry.

A DAIEST, FROM AN UNBORN SON— (From The Ministry.)

Why should this little orphaned dove, In quietude, pale and dry, No dove than the garden's prize, That represents the eye?

It has a beauty for the soul, A fragrance for the heart, When there are more sweet designs, Than there are words to impart.

A precious little English boy, By one baptismal child, An English boy not to be seen, Across the water wild.

And English boys and English boys, Through many a wave have passed, And in that little Church, I wish to see that day.

D. W. D.

THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND.

(By the Rev. J. A. Spencer, A.M.)

1. The Reformation was absolutely required.—Corruption had gone to such lengths that the present state of things could continue no longer. The faith of the Church as contained in the creeds had been added to, and so changed by numerous unscriptural additions, that it was buried out of sight, and had become almost wholly imperceptible and unknown; and the worship of the Church was excessively superstitious, puerile, and hurtful to the souls of men.

2. The Reformation was lawfully conducted and carried through. The bishops and clergy, in their proper capacity, acted as the ambassadors for Christ and the rulers in the Church, and deferred in all things to Holy Scripture and sound doctrine. Popish novelties were cast off, Catholic truths retained and maintained, and the Church set free from the bondage of corrupt doctrine and abominable practices.

3. The Church of England resumed her rightful, original authority to regulate her own affairs. The Church existed in Britain in apostolic days, long before popery was dreamed of. By degrees, the Bishop of Rome usurped dominion over independent Churches, England being of the number. At the Reformation, the bishops and clergy, the representatives of the Church of England, with hardly an exception, asserted and maintained the independence of the Church in the realm of England, and renounced the pope's supremacy.

4. Consequently, in acting for herself, the Church of England is entirely free from the guilt of schism, charged upon her by the papists. She is equally free from the guilt of heretical departure from the faith once delivered to the saints—a charge which is so justly applicable to the Romish Church—since in all things she takes the Holy Scriptures for the standard, and the creeds of the Church as the expression of the true faith.

5. Every thing was done deliberately, cautiously and respectfully. The Scriptures were translated and the version revised and improved several times: the public services were altered as might be, consistently with the preservation of sound doctrine; the people were led, step by step, into the clearer light of Gospel purity and truth; and the Prayer Book, when completed, was respectfully defended against both papist and puritan attacks.

6. The Church of England was reformed not founded anew: it was the old, original Church with its corruption removed, not a new Church taking its start at this date. The Church was there before the pope ever sent to England or ever claimed authority in that Kingdom: it continued there while he was heaving it over it; and when Providence opened the way, it took its rightful position once more. The papists charge it upon the Church that it began with Cranmer, and Ridley, and Latimer, and some Protestants use similar language. Both are wrong, the one wickedly so, the other, perhaps carelessly so.

7. The perpetual interference of the state was in reference mainly to temporal matters, the revenues of the Church, the jurisdiction of bishops, &c. The state never pretended of itself to settle doctrine or give spiritual office and power, which are derived from Christ alone, through the channel of His appointment. Consequently the excess of papists and others are without cause, when they revile the Church of England for the share which the state took in the Reformation.

8. The Reformers were to be charitably judged. Their faults were the faults of the age in which they lived, and their errors were errors of judgment. The great work which they did is not to be undervalued on the one hand, nor they looked too lightly on the other. They labored under difficulties of which we have no adequate conception, and they accomplished a great reform with as little imperfection as can be expected at the hands of fallible men. Let us give them all unjust as well as ungenerous accolades.

9. The Reformation has procured for us religious freedom. It has unshaken the foundation of divine truth, given the mind liberty, set it free from popish tyranny, allowed the people to search into the Divine Oracles, required nothing to be believed as essential to salvation except what Holy Scripture contains, and bestowed upon us a book of devotions which contains the noblest essence of equity, and the most glowing aspirations of devout souls in all past ages.

Wherefore, let us try to hasten the lessons of warning and wisdom which the history of this eventful period so forcibly teaches. Let us render hearty thanks to Almighty God that He conducted us safely through the great perils of error and sword, the Church of England, to whom we, Protestant Episcopalians, owe so much, and whom we regard with so deep and true affection. Let us, especially, seek to show our appreciation of our manifold blessings and privileges, by striving to live holy and consistent lives, in all godly quietness and honesty. Then shall we truly be inheritors of the Blessing, and God shall visit us, for good.

JOHN WESLEY.

(For the Gospel Messenger.)

Mr. Everson.—In looking over the seventh volume of Wesley's works, and the Life of Wesley, I find the following expressions of opinion, and statement of facts, which I think may be interesting to many of your readers on illustrating how it may happen, that contrary to most explicit and avowed designs, wishes and declarations, religious movements may result in issues of destruction, and dismemberment wholly unthought and undesired. Notwithstanding their founder's warnings and wishes, as expressed in the following extracts, the Methodist Societies have left the Church, discarded its Prayer Book, cast off its Ministry, repudiated to a great extent its doctrines, institutions, usages, and Liturgy, and have entrenched themselves in a position of schism over which many wish and without their limits mourn, as at once a creed and a denial of further distinction among themselves, and a final instruction of that unity which the infinite wisdom of a Saviour conferred upon his disciples, and so earnestly sought for them in his intercessions at the throne of the Eternal Father.

W. N. Y.

JOHN WESLEY ON THE PRAYER BOOK. "I believe there is no liturgy in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breathes more of a solid, Scriptural, rational piety than the Common Prayer of the Church of England; and though the use of it was compiled considerably more than two hundred years ago, yet in the language of it is not only pure, but strong and elegant in the highest degree."

Such was the preface prefixed to an edition of the Prayer Book published by John Wesley in 1744, for the use of his followers in this country, under the title of "The Sunday Service of the Methodists in the United States of America, with other occasional services, 12 mo, 1744."

WESLEY IN 1744. "At the first meeting of all our preachers in conference in June, 1744, I exhorted them to keep to the Church; observing that this was our peculiar glory—not to form any new sect, but abiding in our own Church, to do all men all the good we possibly could."

"But as more dissenters joined us, many of whom were much prejudiced against the Church, these, with or without design, were continually infusing their own prejudices into their hearers."

WESLEY IN 1750. "I saw this and gave warning of it from time to time both in private and in public, and in the year 1750 I resolved to bring the matter to a fair issue. So I desired the point might be considered at large whether it was expedient for the Methodists to leave the Church. The arguments on both sides were discussed for several days, and at length we agreed without a dissenting voice—it is by no means expedient that the Methodists should leave the Church of England. Nevertheless the same lesson continued to work in various parts of the kingdom."

WESLEY IN 1776. "The original Methodists are all of the Church of England, and the more awakened they were the more zealously they adhered to it in every point both of doctrine and discipline. Hence we inserted in the first Rules of our Society 'they that leave the Church leave us.' And this we did, not as a point of conscience, but a point of expediency."

WESLEY IN 1769. "I never had any design of separating from the Church; I have no such design now. I do not believe the Methodists in general design it when I am no more here. I do, and will do all that is in my power to prevent such an event. Nevertheless in spite of all that I can do may well separate from it."

"In like opposition to these, I declare once more that I live and die a member of the Church of England, and that none who regard my judgment or advice will ever separate from it."

WESLEY IN 1790. "I have been uniform both in doctrine and discipline for fifty years and more. It is a little too late for me to turn into a new path now I am gray headed."

WESLEY IN 1791—ON HIS DEATH BED. "We thank thee, O Lord, for these and all thy mercies. Bless the Church and King. And grant us truth and peace through Jesus Christ our Lord forever and ever."

WESLEY IN HIS YOUTH. "He was born the 17th of June, 1702, and died the 2d of March, 1791. He was the founder of the Methodist Societies," (not then claiming to be a distinct Church) "and the chief promoter and patron of the plan of itinerant preaching, which he extended through Great Britain and Ireland, the West Indies and America with unexampled success."

1849. There are now seven distinct bodies of Methodists claiming to be each the Church of Christ, as reported in the American Almanac, viz: Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Protestant, Reformed Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist, German Methodist, Alliance Methodist, and now, Methodist Episcopal South.

DEFINITE TEACHING.

(From the same.)

The spirit of sect—says a writer—is dying out in the world; but there is springing up in its place, a system of religion which is yet more destructive to the Gospel and the Church. We should call this new aspirant a worldly eclecticism;—gathering out of all sects what it deems to be Catholic, or rather Protestant, and rejecting whatever is peculiar. It is the "spirit of the age" pervading nominal Christendom, to which the different Christian bodies too willing to conform, are sacrificing their old habit of affirming their own tenets, and are engaging instead in a regular and formal attack upon the systems of others. And in a herd of schism, they rush into the opposite error of throwing down their proper forms, abandoning their distinctive views, and losing in fact, all that characteristically Christian, in a loose, shadowy, and uncertain Catholicism, which is Catholic in no sense but that of negation.

This is the tendency of the Age. There are earnest spirits, however, who are resisting the current, who have fastened for down towards its rapids and whirlpools, have taken alarm, and are endeavouring to reverse, and avenge destruction; and there are others, who, as recalcitrant shall sweep over sectarianism and submerge its lasting-plagues, will flee from the flood of error to the Ark of Christ's Church. The editor of the True Catholic, to whom we have already alluded, observes that there are two ways in which divisions in the Christian world may be brought gradually to an end; and the one, by the various sects dropping their definite faith, and definite forms of government, and adopting those of the Church—in other words, by uniting with the Church; and the other, by denying their faith and forms, and adopting no others in their stead, but remaining content with the vague and indefinite notions of religion which prevail in the world. The latter of these processes, he deems by far the less difficult. Definite systems may be retained—both in government and doctrine—while the change is going forward. The outward still remaining but being regarded as indifferent, the inward with the less compulsion will be working its hidden ways.

"We have very little doubt," says this writer, "as we have often taken occasion to say,—that the day will come when all the existing sects will disappear, and all their members be either united with the Church, in the definite faith once delivered to the Saints, and under the definite government which the Apostles instituted, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; or else be absorbed into a vast body of nominal believers, having no definite creed and no Church form, except one which will be acknowledged to be merely of human origin; perhaps the old Roman form of a State, to which Dr. Arnold was so strongly attached. There will then be but two conflicting bodies; the organized Church, organized on the Divine plan, and the world, which will be arrayed against it, ready to crush it, were it not sustained by the Omnipotence of its Ever Present Head; and yet ready to forgive everything but defection of belief, and faith in a Divinely given authority. This was exactly the condition of the Arnold School; but Dr. Arnold himself was a good man. Like most of the religious men with whom one meets, he was better than his principles. But whenever the barriers of the separate organizations of the sects are broken down, we shall find that the government of the whole man will be in the hands of men, who will hold Arnold's principles, but who will not, like Arnold, be better than his principles."

In prospect of such a crisis, becomes the Church of this day to be firm and positive in her teachings. Her ministers should not consent to soften down the great doctrines of grace into a more palatable creed.

They should not suffer her form of government, her origin, ministry and Sacraments to be shut out of view by a sensibly more Catholic and comprehensive system. The Church in her office, as the "Keeper and Witness of Holy Writ" should be definite as the Gospel. It is her duty to speak distinctly, positively and boldly, for she has a commission so to do. She has "authority," say the Articles, "in controversies of faith"—an authority she may exercise without claiming infallibility. Individuals in her may err, and whole branches of the Church may err; yet individuals and branches do not hesitate to declare what the "truth is, as in Jesus."—And they ought not to hesitate.

If we hold to our standards, as the same are legitimately explained, and may be proven from the Scriptures, we cannot but be positive and definite in our teaching. A fixed and unchangeable Theology—the same yesterday, to-day, and forever—and a distinct and distinctive system of ordinance cannot but be held forth.

Though the same be unpopular, it is our duty to present them; and though the presenting displeases men, the suppression will displease God! If the trumpet sound uncertainly, who will give heed to it? If "Evangelical Truth" be not distinctly announced, who will know of his error? And if "Apostolic Order" be not clearly exhibited, who shall discover his wandering? If "Church of the Living God" be not known as the Church in distinction from rival bodies, what shall save her children from being led astray in their ignorance, or attract strangers to her fold, who are seeking for truth? And in that dividing of the elements which seems likely to ensue when "the faith once delivered" will be almost lost sight of; what shall preserve the pure doctrine of Christ but that "pillar of Truth" on whose front it is written, which shall proclaim it by the Gospel, and expound it by her Creeds, Articles and Liturgy?

ORIGIN OF THE PRAIRIES.

(From the Colander.)

Respecting the origin of these immense fields we have no satisfactory knowledge. It is conjectured, and I believe with a good degree of probability, that their surface was once covered with the waters of the lake, and that these having receded, they were left in their natural evenness of surface, to be enriched by the deposits of ages and thus fitted for the most luxuriant vegetation the world ever saw. There is some thing imposingly grand in the idea that the water of the lakes once extended to the base of the Rocky Mountains, that, dammed back by those mighty barriers, they were sent eastward, to be hurled over the precipices of our Niagara, and thence, through the St. Lawrence, to find enlargement in the ocean. What a world of waters rolled their tides over this quarter of the globe then! and a cataract was Niagara! By what causes such a change has been wrought, whether it was by the gradual draining of the fountain, which now send their diminished supplies through the beds of the western rivers, or by some mighty convulsion of nature, it is utterly useless to conjecture. But that the origin of the prairie is such as I have suggested, seems to be indicated by their structure, their soil, their productions, and the alluvial deposits which lie beneath their surface. Who can say by what mysterious process this garden of the world has been preparing for the occupation and enterprise of Anglo-American civilization, or enumerate the ages which have rolled away since they commenced? In vain does fancy gaze upon the unimpaired labyrinth of the past, for something which shall satisfy the ever recurring inquiries of the curious, or the thoughtful mind. He only who evolved order from the primal chaos can answer such inquiries; and in his own time, if He so choose, He will make the revelation.

BORROWED THOUGHTS.

To be in Christ is heaven below, and to be with Christ is heaven above. Some seem to think they place God under an obligation to them when they engage in religious services, as if the sun was ever debtor because we draw light and heat from it, or the fountain because we refreshed ourselves with its waters. He that runs from temptation is in a very different position from him who runs to meet it—for the first there is a refuge, but none for the latter. How awful the responsibility of pastors! How important that they should be sound in the faith! There is no more certain way of destroying the inhabitants of a town than by poisoning the public fountain whence they draw their water. If conscience be as a thousand witnesses, the all-seeing God is as a thousand consciences. Every man is walking in the road that leads to heaven or that which leads to hell. It becomes every one to ascertain which of the two he has selected. It is a comfort that if our creeds be holy we have not far to carry it. No sin can be little, because there is no little God to sin against. Sin has brought many a believer low suffering, and suffering has kept many a believer from sinning. Young soul and old knowledge form an excellent compound. Temptation is a sin that brings up the scales of the soul. I never trusted God but I found him faithful, nor my heart but I found it false. God has two dwelling places—the highest heaven, and the lowliest heart.

A CHRISTIAN'S AMUSEMENTS.

(From the Episcopal Reminiscence, by Bask.)

But it is objected to all this reasoning, that I would thus shut up all kinds of amusements from profaning Christians.—I answer, that the objection is entirely groundless. I would not deter them from all amusements; but I would have them understand what is meant by the Apostle when he says, "when I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things." This is precisely the situation in which a profaning Christian is, or ought to be; and when he loves and indulges in worldly amusements, it is equivalent to saying—I have sought for pleasures in religion, which I have failed to find; and I have been obliged to turn again to the world. This is the language of the hearts of those who love the world and its vain amusements. But the real Christian has higher views; and even putting the experience of the happiness of religion out of the question, there are dignified enjoyments on the score of recreation which belong to him. There are the charms of literature and science—there are the delights of a rational and enlightened society, the pleasures of conversation—the adornments of domestic life; and an immense variety of social enjoyments, which, so combined, are actually sent by the Creator to play amidst the clouds of life. Can the mere frivolities of pleasure be necessary for a Christian? Is it not in the power of religion to satisfy the minds of its votaries by affording them sufficient employment and delight, but must they turn to the world for a supply which shall be ample? I should blush for

any one who could make such a supposition.—Can a real Christian, whose heart has been changed from the love of the world, and who in the face of his profession is supposed to "set his affections on things above," can such a one, I repeat, ever enjoy the common amusements of the world, which are lighter than vanity? If an individual takes pleasure in religion, I cannot suppose that he can mingle with satisfaction in those pleasures from which religion is studiously excluded; and no man is in his proper place when he cannot carry his religion with him. In the theatre—in the ball-room—in the card table, &c., religion finds no rest, but is like the dove when first sent from the ark; and the professing Christian who is to be found engaged in these, must of necessity bear about him no peculiar "mark of his high calling." If he does not put off his Sunday garments, he must cover them by ornaments, which shall totally disguise them. The pleasures of religion and the pleasures of the world are composed of elements totally dissimilar.

THE AUTHORS OF THE HOMILIES.

(From the Banner of the Cross.)

The history of the composition of the two books of Homilies is very obscure.—The different writers for the most part are unknown.—The first in 1547,—the second 1563. Of the first book it is generally believed that Archbishop Cranmer wrote the Homilies on "Salvation," "Faith," and "Good Works," and probably most of the others, assisted by Bishop Ridley. The Homily on "Brawling and Contention" is evidently, from its style and peculiar phraseology, the work of Latimer, and the one on "Adultery" is given to Thomas Becon, one of Cranmer's chaplains, because it is found published in his works in 1564.

In regard to the writers of the second book, Archbishop Parker speaks of them as being "revised and finished with a second part by him and the other bishops." Burnett (in the preface to the XXXIX Articles) says that Bishop Jewel was particularly engaged in compiling the second, while Blunt, in his History of the Reformation, says "nothing is known but the mere conjecture" in relation to the particular writers.

I have lately accidentally found out one of the authors. Reading the other day the Homilies of St. Chrysostom on 1st Cor. I was struck with the familiarity of the thoughts presented, and was sure I had seen them elsewhere. Upon further reflection it seemed to me that I had met with them in our own Homilies. Upon examination it proved to be so. The last seven pages of the Homilies on Matrimony are only a close translation from St. Chrysostom's 10th Hom. on the 11th ch. of 1st Cor. I thought the fact worthy of being noticed, as I had never before seen it mentioned. I suppose the first part of this Homily is probably taken from some other part of St. Chrysostom, though I have not met with it.

EVIL COMPANY.

The following beautiful allegory was translated from the German:— "Suppose, a wise teacher, would not suffer even his grown up sons and daughters to associate with those whose conduct was not pure and upright. "Dear Father," said the gentle Eulalia to his one son, when he forbade her, in company with his brother, to visit the volatile Lucinda, "dear father, you must think so very odd thing, if you imagine that we should be exposed to danger by it." "The father took in silence a good look at the beauteous and rosy cheeked child. "It will not burn you, my child, take it." Eulalia did so, and beheld her beautiful white hand was soiled and blackened, and so it changed, her white dress also. "We cannot be too careful in handling coals," said Eulalia, in vexation. "Yes, truly," said the father, "you see, my child, that coals, even if they do not burn, blacken. So it is with the company of the vicious."

ECCLIASTICAL INTELLIGENCE.

BERMUDA.

Bermuda papers have received during the past week, which contain some Ecclesiastical notices. From one of the papers of Feb. 28, we extract the following:—The first of the first organization of a Church which had taken place in Bermuda since 1666. The event deserves to be noted independently of other interesting associations; and it will no doubt be followed by the consecration of another sacred edifice, of more imposing architecture, and well adapted to supply an increasing want of Church accommodations.

Communications of St. Anne's Church, St. Peter's, &c.—On Tuesday last the Lord Bishop of the Diocese, attended by the clergy of the islands, commenced the new Church at Bermuda. The old Church, which was the only one of the kind in the colony, had been built some years before the present one, and was in a state of ruin. The new Church is a fine specimen of the architecture of the island, and is well adapted to supply an increasing want of Church accommodations.

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NIAGARA DISTRICT BRANCH OF THE CHURCH SOCIETY OF THE DIOCESE OF TORONTO.

The Managing Committee of the Niagara District Branch of the Church Society of the Diocese of Toronto, are this evening permitted to present their Annual Report. For this society they are indebted to the continued goodness of that Gracious Being, whose blessing they have faithfully sought from the first establishment of this Branch Association, and to whom some they would ascribe all the success of whatever they have been enabled to effect. They are sensible, indeed, that under that blessing such success might have been effected, and that it has not been, they attribute solely to the weakness of those instruments which God has graciously vouchsafed to employ in this work and labour of love. They feel that, whilst He has so graciously vouchsafed to them, that "they who work Him shall not want any good thing," so many of his professed followers have failed to realize the blessed privilege of imparting of those good things which God has entrusted to them, a fair portion to supply the spiritual wants of their brethren.

The year just passed has been signally blessed by "the Giver of all good and perfect gifts" to the inhabitants of the District generally. It was a year remarkable for a very general accession of that earthly blessing, health, and for a very unusual return to the husbandman for all his labours and to the farmer for all his sowing. It was a year in which the wisdom of man directs have not proved equally favourable, and whilst this fact would teach us the folly of trusting too much in man, it would also make us more careful to place our chief reliance on that Gracious Being who will never fail those who, putting their trust in Him, endeavor to do their duty in this condition of life which he has called them to.

The following abstract from the Treasurer's account will show at one view what funds have been collected during the past year, and the expenditure of those of the former:—

Table with columns: For what Purk., Total received, Paid for the Society, Balance on hand, Total. Rows include Niagara, Special Session, Disbursements, and various church expenses.

REPORT OF THE BROCK DISTRICT BRANCH OF THE CHURCH SOCIETY OF THE DIOCESE OF TORONTO.

In presenting the usual Annual Report of the Brock District Branch of the Church Society, your Committee feel that the experience of the past year fully justified the anticipation indulged by your Committee, that the high and holy objects of the Society, to the attainment of which we are continually engaged, are being more and more fully realized, and that the number of our members is increasing, and that the influence of the Gospel is being more and more extensively diffused throughout the land.

Your Committee would most respectfully recommend the more regular and general holding of those parochial meetings, which are so essential to the progress of the Society, and which are so productive of the most beneficial results to the souls of the people. We would also recommend the more frequent holding of those parochial meetings, which are so essential to the progress of the Society, and which are so productive of the most beneficial results to the souls of the people.

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