

# The Brevian.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—ACTS XVII. 11.

No. 3.]

QUEBEC, THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1844.

[Vol. I.]

## Poetry.

FOR THE BREVIAN.

### DEATH. A RELEASE.

As seeks the bird its nest,  
In safety there to rest,  
When it with weary wing no more  
Against the beating storm can soar—  
And there, secure from fear and harm,  
Sweet sleep exerts its soothing charm:—

As man at eve repairs,  
O'ercome with toil and cares,  
To his dear home, where he may find  
Repose to soothe his aching mind,  
And God he thanks with grateful breast,  
And yields his tired limbs to rest:—

So does the spirit fly  
With eager wings on high  
When from its tenement of clay  
To heaven it speeds its joyous way;  
Weary of earth, its sin and crime,  
To seek a more congenial clime.

While forced on earth to stay,  
It drags its painful way;  
And as the prisoner tries in vain  
To ease the pressure of his chain,  
And counts each toilsome day that's past  
And hopes to gain release at last:—

So grieves the souls of those  
Who sigh for heaven's repose;  
But not in vain their longing eyes  
Look toward their destined heavenly prize:  
The day is nigh that sets them free  
From earth, for all eternity.

Gs.

### CONVERSION OF AN INFIDEL,

RELATED BY HIMSELF, AND EXTRACTED FROM A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

You have requested me to communicate to you the "dealings of God towards me," and "all the peculiarities connected with my conversion." It will be difficult to comprise all these particulars within the compass of a letter. Persuaded as I am that my "passage from death to life" was the consummation of a work begun and continued, by divine providence, through a series of years, it will be necessary that I should give you a memoir of my life since the period of our acquaintance. You will be grieved, astonished, appalled. Even now, although I feel my soul "firmly anchored on the rock of eternal ages," yet when it looks back to that frightful abyss, upon the verge of which it trembled and vibrated so long, and so fearfully, it shudders back shuddering and aghast! But to the narrative.

The period of our first acquaintance was, (as you are aware) a darkly melancholy era in my life. I was an orphan, deprived of both parents, under circumstances calculated to give a peculiar poignancy to the bereavement. I was however at a period of life, auspicious to the development of the better traits of the character, and the higher faculties of the mind; and but for one leprous spot, one drop of corroding poison which had been early infused into my mind, I should have escaped the manifold sorrows and afflictions through which I have been doomed to pass. When young men have been flattered into the persuasion that they are the possessors of talent, or genius, there is an ordeal through which the mind seems almost destined to pass—unless the direction be changed by the strongest and most controlling circumstances—I mean religious scepticism and infidelity. There is an intellectual pride in elevating one's self above the opinions of those who surround us, and in combating what are conceived to be the vulgar prejudices and errors of the age. Such most unhappily was the case with myself—my religious education had been neglected. Although I had been early taught, both by precept and example, to venerate the Christian religion, my mind had never been indoctrinated into those convincing evidences upon which its claim to divinity rested. Religion with me was but a blind impulse of feeling, not an enlightened dictate of reason. There was no solid foundation upon which the superstructure had been reared. Is it to be wondered at, that it should have fallen under the first assault of scepticism, and that I should have been made the willing dupe of a false but spurious philosophy? The plausible and ingenious sophistry of Bolingbroke, the entangling metaphysical subtleties of Hume, and I blush to own it, the coarse and vulgar ribaldry of Paine, soon enlisted me, as they have enlisted thousands, under the dark banner of infidelity. Had I remained satisfied with the silent enjoyment of my own opinions, I should not have felt as I now do, so keen a reproach of conscience. But no! enamoured as I was with my discovery of truth, I laboured with the zeal of a propagandist to disseminate its oracles through the world. Looking down from the calm elevation of reason and philosophy, upon a system which I believed led captive the human mind in the fetters of a dark and drivelling superstition, I was prepared to sacrifice every thing to its extinction. While others would have kindly consented to retain a system, which it was conceded was well adapted to promote the happiness of society, from the sublime purity of its morality; and the holy charities which it inculcated, there was nothing in the consideration which appressed the ran- cor of my hostility, or softened the venom of my malice. If there was one thing upon earth which I more cordially hated than another, it was the "Christian religion; and to exterminate it from the world, I would have unsheathed the sword and lighted the faggot! O! what a picture, would my wretched heart have presented to you, could you have sounded the depths of its depravity and pollution! Mild, amiable, gentle, as I seemed, could you have believed that the demon of

a passion so unholy was raging within my bosom!

Such were my religious opinions at the period of our first acquaintance. But there were circumstances which aggravated the morbid melancholy of my feelings. . . . When you knew me, my heart was desolate,—desolate from the rupture of dear, and kindred ties. It yearned to love, and be beloved; to seek in its loneliness some object upon which the treasures of its warm and burning affections could be lavished.

I wandered forth into the world, and into a stranger-land, a being of blighted hopes and crushed affections. And years, long dreary years rolled over me, and the melancholy which had preyed so long upon my mind wore a yet deeper impression. I beheld shadows, clouds, and darkness, gathering over the prospects of my early life; I could not dispel them. The world with all its living energies and its warm desires was to me a barren waste. Like the Hebrew wanderer, there hung upon my heart one deadening, crushing weight, it was the sensation of utter loneliness.

"I roam'd along, the world's tired denizen,  
With none to love me, none to grieve  
The less if I were not."

But at this time a new light dawned upon my mind. Behold! the infidel made the convert to the truths of the Christian revelation. The circumstances which led to this unexpected change of opinion afford a remarkable instance of the waywardness of the human mind; a waywardness which in my instance was actually the offspring of wounded vanity. Recollect the sentiment expressed in a former part of this narrative, that infidelity is frequently the birth of a supposed intellectual superiority, and you will find at once a key for the solution of the marvel. There resided in me, a mechanic, a man certainly of some little degree of mental acuteness, but who conceived that nature had formed him a genius. He professed infidelity and had his disciples. Now here was a wound inflicted upon my vanity. What right had he to elevate himself above the opinions of the age? That was the proud privilege of genius. Was I to stoop from my own mental elevation to a level with his own, and hail him as a fellow infidel? Under the sting of mortified vanity I resolved to silence him. My own opinions were unknown; I would enter upon the arena the champion of Christianity; I would combat in argument, positions to which my mind secretly assented, if by doing so I could expose their advocate to defeat. We were frequently thrown into discussions. Being equipped neither by nature or education for the conflict, he would be driven defeated from the field of argument. You begin to perceive the effect which these discussions produced upon my mind. From habits of thought, and a self-imposed necessity, I became more and more attached to that side of the question which was opposed to my own secret and long cherished opinions. This was not all. In the exercise of my mind in untangling some web of sophistry which had before puzzled me, a truth would be evolved in the process, so clear and luminous, as to force conviction on the mind. I remember that in one of our disputations the inability of the human mind to comprehend the sublime mysteries of revelation, was urged as an argument against the truth of that revelation. I replied, in substance, that men were frequently made infidels by not starting in their reasonings at the right point. Let me, said I, be satisfied, by external and internal evidences, that the Bible is a revelation from God, and the mind will be constrained to acquiesce in the truth of all its doctrines, however incomprehensible those doctrines may be to reason. As simple and as important as this truth is, it had never before occurred to me. You will smile when I tell you, I was actually charmed with what I then considered the conception of a new idea. But its novelty to me, was not all. O! no, thank God! it proved the beacon light to guide the nearly shipwrecked reason from the dark ocean of infidelity, into a bright and glorious haven. Upon my return home I pondered on it. I brought it to bear on myself. I took it as a torch of light in my hand, and explored the dark recesses of my mind. I asked myself the question what has made you an infidel? And I was startled when the answer came, "the incomprehensible mysteries of revelation." I asked myself again, have you ever investigated the internal and external evidences of that revelation? and I could have shrieked when the answer came again—never. You can anticipate the sequel. I surrounded myself with the works of the ablest writers in defence of Christianity. I pored over them day and night. The powers of the mind were expanded to their utmost tension to grapple with the argument. Truth was my aim, and I was daunted by no obstacle or difficulty. I felt like the "wrestler of the sea," diving for the pearl in its caverns; the brilliancy of the gem rewarded the toil and exhaustion of the search. I turned to the Bible, I became chained to its golden page. Light dawned, increased in vividness, until it burst upon the vision with the effulgence of the noon-day sun. O! these were the golden moments when the scoffer and the reviler, sat down to count with the simplicity of a little child, "the lessons of that blessed volume; when I, the once proud worshipper of reason, beheld her altars trampled in the dust beneath 'his stately steps,'" and the baseless fabric of the temple reared upon her poor shreds and fragments, shivered and crushed into atoms!

And now if the sorrows of the wanderer have excited your sympathies in the course of this narrative;—if you have gone with him to the tomb of his buried hopes, and mourned over his desolation, you will rejoice perhaps in the persuasion that here his afflictions have ended.

But alas! no. While reason yielded a cold assent to the overpowering truth of Christianity, the heart was not won to its regenerating influences, or its holy consolations. The vital current of that heart was frozen, and it was still burthened, and palsied, and crushed, under the palpable weight of an eternal loneliness. Wherever I turned, that spell was around me, upon me. If I mingled in the crowded haunts of men, I was alone. If I quaffed the poison of the goblet, or sought the amusements of the social circle, I was alone. Books, music, poetry, the cherished recreations of my happier hours, lost their power to move me. My heart contracted within me, and shrank from all human contact or sympathy. I pined for the congenial solitudes of nature. Her forests, over whose deep and dreamy shadows there brooded an eternal stillness; night with her curtained darkness, her wan stars, and her solemn and mysterious influences, were the spells for which the heart seemed to pine, and to languish. And yet, in these silent communings with nature, I was more and more borne down by the pressure of the load that was upon me. My mental malady assumed what I then believed a type of monomania. I had been much in the habit, while alone and abstracted in thought, of talking aloud to myself. But now I would startle at the sound of my own voice, and a shudder would run through my frame. I remember that I had been meditating upon the utter and hopeless misery of my lot, and when a full sense of my desolation came over me, I laughed aloud. That laugh sounded in my ears like a maniac's laugh. I thought me to pray. From my youth I had rarely prayed; and upon my bended knees I invoked the God of mercy and compassion to remove the burthen from me. The prayer was unanswered. I remembered that I had been in a mad-house, that I had seen men there joyful and happy, in the wreck of human reason, and I prayed for madness. On my return home, I came to a church on the road. It was empty. The door was open.—I staggered to the altar.—I prostrated myself on the floor, and with clasped hands and uplifted eyes I sent a voice of woe and agony to the throne of the Most High. I heard no answer in return, and I left that holy sanctuary with the belief that I was a thing that the curse of God had blighted. You can readily imagine that a state of mental anguish so deep, and so habitual would not leave the moral nature unaffected. My melancholy assumed a sullen moroseness. I hated the world as though it had been the author of my misery. The better feelings of my nature seemed extinguished; and the heart which would have once expanded in kindness and benevolence over a worm, became chilled and petrified into the cheerless apathy of misanthropy. Hated by man; deserted as I believe by God; doomed to linger out a life of slow consuming misery, where was the relief? Oh! my blood curdles in my veins, and the pen almost falls from the trembling hand as I trace it—a demon-whispered—suicide. At first I recoiled with horror from the templer. I need not tell you how I wrestled with the destroyer! How separately the energies of a then feeble and shattered intellect were rallied to the conflict; and how the trembling and agonized soul would retreat from the verge of the yawning gulf before despair could urge it at last to the plunge.

I passed a restless night. Day had dawned. I was between sleep and awake. I remember shrieking out in the bitter agony of my spirit, "O! God, is there no relief from this misery?" That prayer was answered. As if impelled by a supernatural power, I bounded from the bed, I fell upon my knees; my eyes were uplifted to heaven, and without the consciousness of volition the word "religion" burst from my lips. I was not dreaming. I felt that that precious word had been sent down from heaven, and that His hand had been outstretched to save me.

And from that hour the burden of my sorrows seemed lighter. But the heart, the stubborn heart was not yet melted. There was a pious lady of my acquaintance, who had evinced a deep solicitude in my conversion. She sent me a volume of sermons with a request that I should read them. She knew my tastes and hoped that I would be won to serious reflection by the felicity and brilliancy of the diction, the originality and power of the thought, and the soul-stirring eloquence of the appeals. I read them. The heart was melted, but not subdued. There was a hymn I would frequently hear, one stanza of which ran thus,

"Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,  
Hope when all others die, fadeless and pure.  
Here speaks a comforter, in God's name saying,  
Earth hath no sorrow that heaven cannot cure."

And the plaintive words of that hymn, and the seraph strain of music upon which they were borne to the ear, sunk upon the heart with a soothing balm. I would ask myself, "was not I the desolate? . . . was not I the straying? . . . was not I the one in whose bosom all earthly hopes had died?" And the answer to these mournful questions came in tears. The cold, the flinty rock was smitten, and its waters were gushing forth. And O! infatuated man! why didst thou not even then yield to the invitation of thy Heavenly Parent? "Son! give me thy heart," why wait for that affliction which was to bow thee down with a yet heavier load?

There was one,—an early friend. He had been to me a brother. The only one who seemed to love me in my desolation. The only one in whom I had garnered and treasured up all the deep affections of a lonely, but still a burning heart. And that friend sickened. And I stood for days and nights a wacher by his couch. And I felt the pulse grow feeble, and saw the eye that it was fixed and glazed, and heard the sobs of those who were around, and I knew that I stood in the chamber of

death. And I knelt by the cold clay, and clasped the icy hand in my own,—and when I felt that my heart was broken, and the last earthly comfort wrenched from my grasp, I heard as though syllabled by an angel's tongue the blessed words,

"Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot cure," and I sought a secret spot, and I bowed me down in the dust, and upon a mercy seat sprinkled with a Saviour's blood, I laid the offering of a contrite and a broken heart. And for days I prayed for pardon and reconciliation with that God whom I had so grievously offended. And he sent his spirit "to bear witness with my spirit that I was a child of God." Why attempt to describe the "unspeakable joys" of that moment when the messenger of mercy bore to the fainting and agonized soul the tidings of its pardon and reconciliation. O! it was to me a moment steeped in the elixir of all and more than all, that the most fervid imagination could paint of the rapture of heaven. I wished then to die that I might sin no more. My spirit felt like the imprisoned eagle which had burst its cage, soaring to its mansions in the sun, its pinions no more to be soiled by the stains of earth!

From that moment I was a new creature. New, not only in moral and intellectual, but as it seemed to me in physical existence. The instincts of my nature were unchanged, but to what exquisite sensibility were they heightened! The spirit imparted its renewed susceptibilities to the material elements with which it was likened. Through every avenue of sense there was poured in a pleasure intense and before unexperienced. The blood bounded through my veins in a stream of vivid emotion. I ran, leaped, shouted. I looked out upon the heavens and upon the earth, upon the familiar objects of the glorious universe, but it was with a gifted vision. They had changed, "all things had become new." The light shone lovelier to the eye than it was wont, a brighter smile was upon the landscape, a softer balm in the air, and the music of nature was fraught with a richer melody. The spirit of love seemed to breathe around me as air. It pervaded every thing, hallowed every thing. I felt that I was beneath the shadow of its wings. Through my inmost soul there was poured one bright, ceaseless, unfathomable tide of love. I loved every body and every thing. I could not have hurt a fly. It was the creature of God's hands. He, I knew, loved me. O! it was sweet to feel that He was my Father, my dear Father, and that I could weep and sob upon his bosom. Yes! the proud, stern man had become a child—a very babe, humble, trusting, doating. The verdure of youth had returned to the heart so long palsied and withered. The dreary and barren void was filled, filled to overflowing. The yearning, the vague, intense craving of my nature to love and be beloved, was gratified. I was no longer the lonely, desolate, and friendless wanderer upon the earth. God was with me, every where present, to guide, support and comfort me. O! the first love of a Christian, who can tell it! Who can measure the length, and breadth, and depth of that fountain of bliss in the soul! Go! poor, deluded man! Go! revel in every pleasure which the world can give thee, drain its maddening bowl to the dregs; pile up for thyself the gold, and the silver, and the jewels of the earth; win from fame her laurels, from glory her empire; Go! and when thou hast toiled out thy days in the pursuit, when the spirit has become wan, and wearied, and sated, then return, laden with thy treasures, and tell me, couldst thou barter their all for the Christian's first hope of heaven!

Here ends my narrative. It has been long, and perhaps tedious. I have laid bare my inmost heart to your gaze. I have portrayed with a faithful pencil, its weakness, its follies, its depravity, and its crimes. While you have shuddered, you have yet pitied, and when the wanderer seemed most desolate, the friend of his early years gave him a tear.

E. W. H.

(From the Southern Churchman.)

### A NON-EPISCOPALIAN'S ESTIMATE OF EPISCOPACY.

(After alluding to the dark periods of Romanism, and of persecution charged upon the Church of England.)

We do not charge this on the Episcopacy of our times. We do not believe that it is essential to its existence. We do not believe that it is its inevitable tendency. With more grateful feelings, we recall other events of its history. We associate it with the brightest and happiest days of religion, and liberty, and literature, and law. We remember that it was under the Episcopacy that the Church in England took its firm stand against the Papacy; and that this was its form when Zion rose to light and splendor, from the dark night of ages. We remember the name of Cranmer,—Cranmer, first, in many respects, among the reformers; that it was by his steady and unerring hand, that, under God, the pure Church of the Saviour was conducted through the agitating and distressing times of Henry VIII. We remember that God watched that wonderful man; that he gave this distinguished prelate access to the heart of one of the most capricious, cruel, inexorable, blood-thirsty, and licentious monarchs that has disgraced the world; that God, for the sake of Cranmer, and his Church, conducted Henry, as "by a hook in the nose," and made him faithful to the Archbishop of Canterbury, when faithful to none else; so that, perhaps, the only redeeming trait in the character of Henry is his fidelity to this first British prelate under the Reformation. The world will not soon forget the names of Latimer, and Ridley, and Rogers, and Bradford; names associated in

the feelings of Christians, with the long list of ancient confessors "of whom the world was not worthy;" and who did honor to entire ages of mankind, by sealing their attachment to the Son of God on the rack, or amid the flames. Nor can we forget that we owe to Episcopacy that which fills our minds with gratitude and praise, when we look for examples of consecrated talent, and elegant literature, and humble devoted piety. While men honor elevated Christian feeling; while they revere sound learning; while they render tribute to clear and profound reasoning, they will not forget the names of Barrow and Taylor, of Tillotson, and Hooker, and Butler;—and when they think of humble, pure, sweet, heavenly piety, their minds will recur instinctively to the name of Leighton. Such names, with a host of others, do honor to the world. When we think of them, we have it not in our hearts to utter one word against a Church which has thus done honor to our race and to our common Christianity.

Such we wish Episcopacy still to be. We have always thought that there are Christian minds and hearts that would find more edification in the forms of worship in that Church, than in any other. We regard it as adapted to call forth Christian energy, that might otherwise be dormant. We do not grieve that the Church is divided into different denominations. To all who hold essential truth, we bid God speed; and for all such we lift our humble supplications to the God of all mercy, that he will make them the means of spreading the Gospel around the globe. We ourselves could live and labor in friendliness and love, in the bosom of the Episcopal Church. While we have an honest preference for another department of the great field of Christian action; while providential circumstances, and the suggestions of our own hearts and minds, have conducted us to a different field of labor; we have never doubted that many of the purest flames of devotion that rise from the earth, ascend from the altars of the Episcopal Church; and that many of the purest spirits that the earth contains, minister at those altars, or breathe forth their prayers and praises in language consecrated by the use of piety for centuries.

We have but one wish in regard to Episcopacy. We wish her not to assume arrogant claims. We wish her not to utter the language of denunciation. We wish her to follow the guidance of the distinguished minister of her Church, whose book we are reviewing, in not attempting to "unchurch" other denominations. We wish her to fall in with, or to go in advance of others, in the spirit of the age. Our desire is that she may become throughout,—as we rejoice she is increasingly becoming,—the warm, devoted friend of revivals, and missionary operations. She is consolidated; well marshalled; under an efficient system of laws; and pre-eminently fitted for powerful action in the field of Christian warfare. We desire to see her what the Macedonian phalanx was in the ancient army; with her dense, solid organization, with her unity of movement, with her power of maintaining the position which she takes; and with her eminent ability to advance the cause of sacred learning, and the love of order and of law, attending or leading all other churches in the conquests of redemption in an alienated world. We would even rejoice to see her who was first in the field at the Reformation in England, first, also, in the field, when the Son of God shall come to take to himself his great power; and whatever positions may be assigned to other denominations, we have no doubt that the Episcopal Church is destined yet to be, throughout, the warm friend of revivals, and to consecrate her wealth and power to the work of making a perpetual aggression on the territories of sin and of death.—Rev. Albert Barnes.

### THEMES FOR CONVERSATION

There is perhaps no department of Christian life and influence susceptible of greater improvement than daily conversation. At the family meals, in the evening circle, and in the social intervals of business, the watchful Christian will find many opportunities to give a profitable direction to the course of familiar remark. In order to do this, there is often requisite some previous care and preparation.

As a general rule, it is important to avoid most of the common rumors of the day. Many of them amount to nothing more than unprofitable gossip respecting men in public life, or the private characters of individuals in ordinary society. Hence, they degenerate into scandal—misrepresentations of the absent and defenceless, and occasion many hasty expressions which inflict unnecessarily a lasting injury upon some of our fellow-men.

It is not sufficient merely to shun the evil, but it is our duty to encourage and secure the good. The discoveries of modern sciences—the reports of intelligent travellers—the labours and travels of our missionaries at different stations; the theme of some new and profitable book not yet generally circulated—the nature and uses of the fine-arts—the history of our country and of other lands—the prospects of the church of Christ—the doctrines, precepts, prophecies and promises of the Bible, its geography and biography, its beauty of style, and exuberance of evidence—the cause of humanity every where, however depraved or promoted—these are some of the ample