

Poetry.

My Prayer Book.

MARRIAGE.

"An honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church."—*Form of Solemnization of Matrimony.*

ALTHOUGH the birthday of this God-made earth,
Seraphic harpers rose to sing,
Whose choral ecstasies proclaim'd its worth
And caused heaven's crystal arch to ring,
All was imperfect, till a Priest was there
Creation's mouth to be, and mind, and prayer.

Vain seem'd the splendour which no eye could see,
The melody that none could hear;
But when God utter'd, "Let Mine Image be,"
Creation thrill'd, as man drew near;
And what was meaningless, and mute, and dead,
Warm'd into life, and glow'd beneath his tread.

As man for earth, so woman was required
The crowning grace of man to form;
Alone, not even Adam was inspired
To feel creation's godlike charm;
And thus, faith hears this fiat from The Throne,
"It is not good for man to be alone."

So ere the fall, a Priest almighty brought
A bridal Eve to Adam's heart;
A living echo to the love he sought,
A help-meet never to depart,
A true companion for the soul to be,
Fresh from her God, in faultless purity.

Marriage is holy. May no heathen fire
Around the christian altar flame;
Impassion'd souls let saintliness inspire
And hallow hymeneal claim;
Belials in sense are minds by flesh o'eruled,
And love is vice, unless by virtue school'd.

How hush'd and holy is yon bridal scene.
Before God's altar!—view'd by one
Who e'er in faith to Cana's home hath been,
That marriage group to gaze upon,
Where the pale water blushed itself to wine,
Moved by a miracle of grace divine.

Stainless in vesture, as the lilies white,
With flower-buds in her wreathed hair,
Fearful and trepid, with o'erawed delight
Lo, the young bride is kneeling there,
Her drooping lids in mild dejection bent
And young heart with a holy conflict rent.

In that pure breast what garner'd feelings play
Like pulses with mysterious beat,
To think sweet girlhood now hath wing'd away
And love must quit a calm retreat,
Sacred to thought, by friends and forms no more,
And truths, which made the reeling heart run o'er!

It is not that a voiceless dread awakes
Suspicion, lest her choice be wrong;
No blighting vision o'er the future breaks
To which both guilt and grave belong:
Yet, sadness looms around her like a spell,
As oft in marriage-chime there seems a knell.

Our life is mystery; and the brightest joy
That flushes round a feeling heart,
Seems coldly shaded by some dim alloy
Doom'd never from man's world to part:
True mirth with mournfulness is oft allied,
As living babes suggest the babes who died.

And she, yon bridal star of beauty now,
Oh, marvel not, as there she kneels,
That, ere the wife can dawn upon her brow,
Back to bright girlhood fancy steals;
Dead joys revive in tombs to fancy dear,
Melt through the heart, and mingle with a tear.

Last eve, at halcyon twilight's dreamful hour
When none but God the soul could see,
She pray'd and ponder'd in her girlish bower,
And sigh'd, young Past! her thoughts o'er thee;
Flower, fruit, and pathways, all instinct with truth,
Seem'd to accost her like the spells of youth.

She mused on what her spousal life might fold
Within its undevelop'd scene;
On wings of love recall'd the times of old,
And wept o'er all bright hearts had been;
And scarce perceived the pensive moonlight throw
Its calm cold lustre on the lake below.

But, maiden! ere thy sacred ring be worn,
Beyond a mother's purest gift,
The church hath up to Heaven's high portals borne
A prayer, which shall thy soul uplift
To heights of bliss, serene as brides attain,
Whose wedded hearts are thrones where Christ will reign.

Souls are espoused by every hallow'd claim,
If wedlock far diviner prove
Than mere clay-throbs, which boast the common name.

Of what flesh means by mortal "love:"—
Christ and the Church! are shadow'd out by this,
And cast heaven's radiance round an earthly bliss.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CONTROVERSY.

(From a letter to Sir John James, Bart., written in 1741, by Bishop Berkeley.)

The Scriptures and Fathers, I grant, are a much better help to know Christ and His religion than the cold and dry writings of our modern Divines. Many who are conversant in such books, I doubt, have no more relish for the things of the Gospel than those who spend their time in reading the immense and innumerable tomes of Scholastic Divinity, with which the Church of Rome abounds. The dry polemical theology was the growth of Rome, begun from Peter Lombard, the Master of the Sentences; and grew and spread among the Monks and Friars, under the Pope's eye. The Church of England is not without spiritual writers of her own. Taylor, Ken, Beveridge, Scott, Lucas, Stanhope, Nelson, the author of the works falsely ascribed to the writer of the Whole Duty of Man, and many more, whom I believe you will find not inferior to those of the Church of Rome. But I freely own to you that most modern writings smell of the age, and that

there are no books so fit to make a soul advance in spiritual perfection as the Scriptures and ancient Fathers.

I think you will find no Popery in St. Augustine, St. Basil, or any writers of that antiquity. You may see, indeed, here and there, in the Fathers a notion borrowed from philosophy (as they were originally philosophers); for instance, something like a Platonic or Pythagorean Purgatory; but you will see nothing like indulgences, or a bank of merits, or a Romish purgatory, whereof the Pope has the key. It is not simply believing even a Popish tenet, or tenets, that makes a Papist, but believing on the Pope's authority. There is in the Fathers a divine strain of piety, and much of the spiritual life. This, we acknowledge, all should aspire after, and I make no doubt is attainable, and actually attained, in the communion of our Church, at least as well as in any other.

It is dangerous arguing from our notion of the expediency of a thing, to the reality of the thing itself. But I can plainly argue from facts against the being of such an expedient. In the first centuries of the age, when heresies abounded, the expedient of a Pope, or Roman oracle, was unknown, unthought of. There was then a Bishop of Rome; but that was no hindrance or remedy of divisions. Disputes in the Catholic Church were not ended by his authority. No recourse was had to his infallibility; an evident proof they acknowledged no such thing. The date of his usurpations, and how they grew with his secular power, you may plainly see in Giannoni's History of Naples; I do not refer you to a Protestant writer.

Men travelling in daylight see by one common light, though each with his own eyes. If one man should say to the rest, Shut your eyes and follow me, who see better than you all; this would not be well taken. The sincere Christians of our communion are governed, or led, by the inward light of God's grace, by the outward light of His written Word, by the ancient and Catholic traditions of Christ's Church, by the ordinances of our National Church, which we take to consist all and hang together. But then we see, as all must do, with our own eyes, by a common light; but each with his own private eyes. And so must you too, or you will not see at all. And, not seeing at all, how can you choose a Church? why prefer that of Rome to that of England? Thus far, and in this sense, every man's judgment is private, as well as ours. Some, indeed, go further; and, without regard to the Holy Spirit, or the Word of God, or the writings of the primitive Fathers, or the universal uninterrupted traditions of the Church, will pretend to canvass every mystery, every step of Providence, and reduce it to the private standard of their own fancy; for reason reaches not those things. Such as these, I give up and disown, as well as you do.

PERVERSIONS TO POPERY.

(From the Chester Courant)

The pious earnestness which has invariably distinguished the character and conduct of some of those eminent individuals, who have apostatised to Rome, forbids us to impute their apostasy to that spirit of piqued disappointment, or irritated self-sufficiency, which has led to so many similar perversions; it seems rather to have been the result of what we must take the liberty of calling a too morbid yearning after abstract notions of infallibility and catholicity, based on erroneous conceptions of ecclesiastical history and practice. That the Church of England is "the pillar and the ground of the truth," the very "Catholic and Apostolic Church" which holds the Divine commission for the due administration of the Word and Sacraments, we have no doubt; and sure we are that such men, if honest to their own convictions, will not find in the Church of Rome that rest and peace, which they say the Anglican Church has failed to yield them in their trying doubts and anxieties. With that, however, we have no concern, "to their own Master, they stand or fall;" our business is rather with the effect produced by such events on the public mind. There are those who in the indulgence of loose notions of Puritanism, scoff at such secessions as the natural consequences of "Church principles;" and with ill-disguised glee cry out, "There! there! so would we have it." It is not among those who cherish an abiding love for the Church in its efficiency, and the Prayer Book in its integrity, that we must look for these perversions; but among men, who disprising "the good old paths" of their forefathers, perversely seek to engraft upon our worship, fancies and novelties of a more than doubtful tendency, and so "play at Popery" in dreamy abstractions about union with Rome, that the mind becomes warped by close adherence to religious sentimentalities: studying only one class of books; it insensibly slides into the adoption of error; and then when the event arises which is to try their faith, "by and by they are offended," and seek to solace their vexed spirits at strange altars. When men begin to cavil and dispute, reason is too often puzzled; "the right of private judgment" bewilders; and in a vain endeavour to understand and account for every difficulty, they make shipwreck of their faith. The true anchor of an English-Churchman's faith is to be found in the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer; and he who abides most steadily by her

teaching, will be safest from the mistakes of Sec-tarianism on the one hand, and the delusion of Romanism on the other; but when such men as Lord Feilding fall from their steadfastness, how much need is there of the fervent supplication of the Church to the Holy Spirit for "a right judgment in all things." But it may be asked, are there no grievances in the present aspect of ecclesiastical affairs, which have a tendency to shake public confidence in the Church's soundness and vitality?—No doubt there are; but surely the way to remedy such evils, or redress such wrongs, is not by a rash or even a deliberate retreat into a communion which enlightened Christianity cannot fail to condemn as a dangerous and superstitious "deceit." Discouraging as these painful secessions are, we do not participate in the gloomy fears which some of our correspondents have expressed on the subject. While desirous of using all our influence for the maintenance of the rights and doctrines of the Church, we are convinced that amongst all those defections, there is a strong and growing attachment to the Church of England; and that the day of her redemption from that political bondage of which such loud complaints are now made, is fast approaching. It cannot be that she can much longer remain in that anomalous condition, in which many of her benefices are distributed by Dissenters; and she may be compelled, as Sir John Jervis once strongly put it, to take a Jew for a Bishop, should the Sovereign insist upon such a nomination! But even such a deplorable state of Church law forms no justification for apostasy; the true sons of the Church will rather labour to remove every spot which disfigures the beauty of her proportions, or the spirituality of her character; and many such sons are now gathering to her support and her extension. Let not the true-hearted despond, because some bend to the power of the Popedom; the Prophet at the rock of Horeb thought that he only was left to vindicate the covenant, and rebuild the altar of his God: but he received the Divine assurance, that there were left "seven thousand in Israel, who had not bowed unto Baal;" and should the Church be called upon to pass through the furnace of affliction, she need fear no harm if faithful to her mission as the keeper and witness of the truth; for her Protector shall be "seen walking in the midst of the fire."

A TRAP TO CATCH A SUNBEAM.

(Continued from our last.)

It struck him at last that part of the advice he could follow, he could clean the room, certainly, at least have it cleaned; so, early in the morning, David determined to venture up stairs to the woman of the house, who let him the room he inhabited, and ask her to lend him the services of her eldest child. Although for many years he had been Mrs. Dennis's tenant, he had never been in her room, never held any communication with her, save to pay his weekly rent, and she, like the rest of the people who knew his grumbling disposition, and the total impossibility to comfort him, never tried to do so.

It seemed to cost him an effort to make up his mind to ascend the staircase from his own gloomy room; he opened his door, looked out and then went in again;—at last he opened it very suddenly, and with a quick step, ascended three or four of the stairs, paused and considered again;—this reflection seemed to decide him, and he did not stop again till he stood before Mrs. Dennis's room.

He knocked gently at the door, it was opened by a clean, fat, merry-looking woman, who started back in surprise. "Why, bless my heart Mr. Coombe, who'd ever a-thought a-seeing you, is anything the matter? come in do, take a chair, Sir," and she handed the cobbler a chair by the fire, on which a bright kettle was singing, and before which a table was drawn, ready laid for breakfast. In the window were a few plants of Chrysanthemum in bright red flower-pots, and altogether an air of cleanliness, cheerfulness and comfort pervaded the little room. A fat, healthy child was seated on the ground, expressing, in its own sweet way, its pleasure at the toy with which it was playing,—on its little white head had rested a Sunbeam!

"Well," thought David, "one would a' imagined that little chap warn't up to laying a Trap, but he's caught one of them Sunbeams;—what a funny dream! I mustn't say nothing about it here though, they'll think I'm mad."

"And what's brought us the pleasure of seeing you, Mr. Coombe?" asked Mrs. Dennis. "Why, Ma'am, I wants your gal to come and clear up my place a bit."

Talk of astonishment, never was it so depicted as in Mrs. Dennis's face at this speech. Clear up Coombe's place a bit! oh! how often had she longed to do so: felt that his room was a disgrace to her house, and thanked her stars that it was the Kitchen, and that the friends who came to see her, could not see it. Clear the place up a bit, good gracious! "Certainly she shall, Mr. Coombe," at length she said, "she shall come as soon as ever she's done her breakfast; will you take some along with us?" "Thank you, well, as you're so kind, I will take a snack."

"Here is Betsy, come Betsy," she continued, addressing a good looking girl, who entered the room, "make haste and eat your breakfast, Mr.

Coombe, wants you to go down and clean his room up a bit," and Mrs. Dennis winked tremendously at her daughter, who stared in astonishment at the visitor and his request. "So make haste Betsy, and clear up here, and then you can go down to Mr. Coombe's." "Yes mother;—father ain't coming into breakfast I s'pose."—"No dear; come, bustle about."

Quickly the tea was made: the little white headed baby was lifted from the floor, fastened in a chair, and presented with a leaden spoon to amuse him until they had time to feed him. Mrs. Dennis cut the bread and butter, and handed it to Coombe, who took it timidly, as he felt the strong contrast between his black fingers and the brown, but perfectly clean, ones of his good-hearted hostess. As the meal proceeded David gradually felt more comfortable, though the strange feeling of being comfortable for the first time for many years, could not wear off.

What a cheerful room it was,—what a change from his own gloomy, dirty, dingy one, and how that Sunbeam seemed to revel in it! now glittering on the bright pewter tea-pot, then dancing on Mrs. Dennis's tea, then glancing on the old cat's back, and hiding among the Chrysanthemums in the window, and when the child had done his breakfast, and was again upon the ground, it fell on the tin toy with which the boy was playing, and seemed to sparkle more and more as the child crowed with glee.

"How the sun do stream in here Mrs. Dennis," at length David ventured to remark, "how uncommon you must miss it when it's a wet, dull day, and there ain't no sun." "No, Mr. Coombe, we don't, it seems always sunny here, we don't take no particular notice of the weather,—when we're all well and together, we're too happy to mind it. You're my sun, ain't you, my blessing," she continued, snatching the child from the ground and covering him with kisses; "mother's own boy, don't she love him, that's all."

One day it was to be hoped that the boy would be more grateful for that good mother's love, but as it was he screamed lustily and struggled violently to be put down and to return to his toy; yet the mother's speech had its full effect upon David, and through the baby's voice he seemed to hear the spirit's words, "In these hearts, there is always a sunbeam." Betsy soon cleared away the breakfast, and putting on a large apron, prepared to take her way to the gloomy room below. "Shall I find some soap there, Mr. Coombe, or shall I take some?" "Why, I'm afraid I'm out of soap,—oh lor!" You may well say, or lor! David,—out of soap indeed. "Oh!" said Mrs. Dennis, "take some soap and a pail and brushes and so on, of course, all you want, you know." With true delicacy she felt all this was needed, but would not have him pained to say so. Well armed therefore with cleansing apparatus, Betsy departed, and David who had some work to take home at a little distance, departed too,—Mrs. Dennis good-naturedly making him promise, that if his room was not finished on his return, he would take his dinner with them; and away he went with his peculiar shuffling walk, wondering to himself how he should like his room when it was clean!—whether he should have that strange dream again, and whether the "Sunbeam" would really come and lighten his dwelling.

And thus he pondered, as he shuffled up one street and down another, and finally entered a little court where he was going to leave some work, and received the money he hoped.

He knocked at the open door, and waited: no answer; he knocked again. David was beginning to get very cold, and rather impatient; so he coughed rather loudly, and then a low, weak voice said, "Is any one there?" "Only me, Mr. Miffin," answered Coombe. "Come in, will you then," answered the voice, "I can't get up," and David entered and walked into the front room, where, on a press bed, lay a man suffering evidently from severe illness.

The room was dirty and in great confusion, and a coke fire was smouldering in the rusty grate. "Well, Mr. Coombe, brought boots home, eh? no use to me, I'm very bad." "Sorry to hear it, Sir, I'm sure everybody seems ill or miserable or something, oh lor!" "My wife's been out this two hours, and I'm all alone wretched enough I can tell you. I believe she's gone out to try if she can get us something to eat, we'd no dinner yesterday, and how you're to be paid I don't know;" and a long sigh told a sad tale of physical and mental suffering.

There was a pause, and David said to himself, "two and-eight pence at home, and eighteen pence for next job,—well yes I will. As to paying of me, Mr. Miffin, why don't be worrying yourself about that; the best thing as you can do is to get well, wear these here boots and make another hole in them, for old Coombe to mend, when you can pay him, oh lor!"

The sick man opened his large sunken eyes, and stared at the bent dirty figure before him, and then holding out his wan thin hand to him, said in a low trembling voice, "Bless you, this is true charity; draw that curtain, friend, please, the light is too strong;" there was a blaze of sunlight in