

Original Poetry.

For the Church.

THE DYING CHRISTIAN.

From the French of Alphonse de Lamartine.

I. Hark! 'tis the solemn knell of death that sounds With measured clang. What pious crowd surrounds My dying form? And why that funeral strain— The torch-light pale? Is this thy voice, O Death, That strikes my ear at last?—I gasp for breath! Now yawns the opening tomb!

II. Oh thou! redeeming spark of fire divine! Dweller immortal in this earth,—be thine The care! dispel these terrors!—death is near To free thee! part my soul—throw off thy chain— Lay by this load of misery, and pain!— Is this the death I fear?

III. Yes, fleeting time has ceased my hours to mete! Refulgent messengers from Heaven's high seat Celestial—whither fly ye? to what land Of new delight?—I float, I float on glowing waves! The heavens expand! see burst the yawning graves! Earth glides away—a distant land!

IV. But hark! 'tis human wail and groans I hear— And sighs break forth upon my list'ning ear! What! fellow exiles, do ye mourn my fate? You weep! already from the sacred cup Oblivion I have drained! my soul mounts up, And enters at the heavenly gate!

B. V. R.

Belleville, 11th Dec., 1838.

CHURCH CALENDAR.

Dec. 30.—Sunday after Christmas.

1839.

Jan. 1.—Circumcision of Christ.

6.—Epiphany.

13.—First Sunday after Epiphany.

PASSING THOUGHTS.

BY CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

No. XVI.

THE HOUR-GLASS.

The perfection to which our modern mechanics have carried the art of watch and clock making, with the abundance and comparative cheapness of those useful auxiliaries, has rendered the simple and once popular hour-glass quite a rarity among us. Perhaps its scarceness is one recommendation; for our proud, impatient spirits, ever thirsting for something new and strange, spurn at what is abundant and common. One of my earliest recollections leads me to the modest dwelling of a worthy old spinster, who followed the employment of a bonnet-maker, occasionally repairing and remodelling chintz dresses, of fabric too valuable to be thrown away, and of fashion too antique to suit the then modern taste. I remember her, a tall, spare figure, seated in fashion as upright as the high back of her wooden chair, and exercising despotic rule over two young damsels, apprenticed to learn the mystery of her calling. A well-boarded floor, strewn with dry yellow sand, a small square bit of carpet, laid precisely in front of the white hearth-stone, a little round table placed before the mistress, and just within arm's length of the girls, and a demure tabby cat, purring on a low three-legged stool—these are all the particulars that I can avouch for at this distance of time, save and except an hour-glass of capacious dimensions, standing on the broad ledge of an old fashioned casement, near the left hand of its owner, who, with quick, careful glance, failed not to detect the last sand, in the act of escaping, and to reverse, in the twinkling of an eye, the silent monitor. I was, even at an infantine age, somewhat given to thought; and happy was the day to me, when I could obtain leave to go and ask our civil neighbour for a few snippings of her many coloured materials, to eke out the wardrobe of a twopenny doll. She was no loser by it, for I was often permitted to carry a basket of fruit, or choice vegetables, from our spacious garden, to regale the old lady; and I took care so to time my visits, as to ensure being present at that adroit and interesting operation, the turning of her hour-glass.

Many years have passed since then, Many changes have I seen;

and, from this early recollection being deeply impressed, I cannot now cast my eyes on an old-fashioned hour-glass, but it becomes identified with that of the good sempstress. I seem to view it through the long chequered vista that lies between me and the scenes of careless childhood; and as a rapid glance scans that intervening space, the hour-glass becomes a memento more touching than any classical association could render it.

There is surely something more suitable to the stealthy lapse of time, in the noiseless and almost imperceptible fall of the sands, than in the ticking of chronometers, more practically useful. The deepening vacancy above, the rising heap beneath, and the falling away, from time to time, of that miniature mountain which gathers below,—all have a meaning. I observe that the sand in the upper division of the glass, running from the centre, often leaves a hollow, producing deception as to the quantity actually subtracted. Clinging yet to the sides, it makes the vacancy look less; just as we love to deceive ourselves as to the proportion of our numbered days that has escaped. The pyramidal appearance of the sand below, as the last particles that fall produce an eminence, until, displaced by following grains, they sink into the common level: this vividly represents the undue importance assumed by events while yet very recent; although, while dwelling on their magnitude, we well know that, displaced by other things, they will soon be mingled with the common mass of recollections. It were easy to moralize at great length on the subject; but I would rather spiritualize, and read the lesson in its highest, holiest sense. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." The days remaining to us we cannot number, for we know not but that our very last sand is escaping while we try to compute; but the days that are gone—O, what a testimony do they bear against us! We may have applied our time and faculties to the acquirement of wisdom, according to the general sense of the word among men; but our hearts—our most secret desires and ardent affections—how far have they been centred in the wisdom that is from above, and in "Christ, the wisdom of God?" An honest answer to this question, would send the greater number of us to the throne of grace, with the confession that we still have to be taught this application of heart to the purposes designed by our heavenly Father. Solomon trod the whole round of car-

nal and intellectual enjoyments, having his fill of all wisdom; yet how late in his long and prosperous life did he sit down to write "vanity of vanities" upon it all, and apply his heart to the God from whom, through the abuse of his abundant gifts, the favored king had so deeply revolted! Let me number the days that are gone, and seeing how God has hitherto been robbed by me, let me strive to redeem the few that may still remain.

ANECDOTES RESPECTING THE BIBLE.

There are a few anecdotes relating to the publication of the first authorised translation of the Bible, which are well worth recording, as demonstrative of the temper in which our ancestors received the blessing, and the use they made of it. A command was issued that every church should be provided with one of these folio bibles. It was done; but the anxiety of the people, of such as could, to read the precious volume, and of such as could not, to handle and turn over the pages of that book, which they had been in the habit of regarding as a thing of mystery and prohibition, was so great, that it was found necessary to chain them for security to the desks. In a country church I have seen the very bible, and the very chain preserved as relics, which, three hundred years ago, attested the popular feeling on this subject. But so deeply rooted were the old prejudices of the governing authorities, that it was four years after the Bible was placed in the churches, before the King could be persuaded to revoke the decrees which forbade his subjects to have it in their private possession. At last they were graciously permitted, by royal license, to purchase bibles for their own reading at home. Then it was that every body who could afford it, bought a copy of the Scriptures: such as could not buy the whole, purchased detached passages. A cart-load of hay was known to be given for a few chapters of St. Paul's Epistles. And many there were, who having learned to read in their old age, that they might have the pleasure of poring over the written word, and reading with their own eyes the wonderful things of God, exclaimed with the Prophet, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart." The crosses and public places often presented the moving sight of men, women and children, crowding round a reader who was rehearsing the songs of Zion, and the prophecies of the seers of Israel, or the tender discourses of the Redeemer of mankind.

One poor man, named John Marbeck, was so desirous of making himself the master of a bible, that he determined to write one out, because he had not money enough to buy one; and when he had accomplished that laborious task, he set about the still more trying toil of making a Concordance.

"They would hide the forbidden treasure under the floors of their houses," says Mr. Blunt in his admirable 'Sketch of the Reformation,' which every body should read, "and put their lives in peril, rather than forego the book they desired; they would sit up all night, their doors being shut for fear of surprise, reading, or hearing others read, the Word of God; they would bury themselves in the woods, and there converse with it in solitude; they would tend their herds in the fields, and still steal an hour for drinking in the good tidings of great joy."

Such being the avidity with which the Scriptures were cherished, let the reader imagine the consternation which overwhelmed the pious of this country, when the capricious Henry reversed his former decrees in favour of biblical learning, and threatened his people with imprisonment, confiscation, and fire, if any below the privileged classes should presume to search the Scriptures. This terrible stretch of royal prerogative was confirmed by Act of Parliament in 1543;—and it seemed like a seal of human folly and infatuation, forced upon a tyrant king and a subservient senate, to refute future calumnies against Protestantism, and to be handed down to posterity as proof, that the Reformation was carried on, not by the cold mechanism of state politics, but by the fervent zeal and undaunted devotion of holy men, in spite of kings and parliaments. Our Protestant forefathers would have been crushed, and their names and their labours clean forgotten, if the will of their temporal and spiritual rulers could have been accomplished. This proclamation of 1543 set forth that "No books were to be printed about religion without the King's consent; none might read the scripture in any open assembly, or expound it, but he who was licensed by the king or his ordinary. Every nobleman or gentleman might cause the Bible to be read to him in or about his house. Every merchant, who was a house-keeper, might also read it, but no woman, nor artificers, apprentices, journeymen, serving-men under the degree of yeomen, and no husbandman, nor labourer, might read it."

Such were the struggles of Protestantism! Nearly two hundred years after Wickliffe's translation first appeared, even after the authorised version was published and freely circulated, the king, who is falsely described by our opponents as the nursing father of our faith, strove, by every means with which absolute power invested him, to stifle the infant religion, which he is said to have engendered.

There is a curious document still in existence, which shews what was felt by the humble and lowly Christians of that day, who were thought too degraded in intellect to be permitted to read in the Bible. It is in the form of a note, made by a shepherd in the spare leaf of a book, which he bought after the passing of the act above referred to:—"At Oxford, in the year 1546, brought down to Seynbyr, by John Darly, price 14d. When I kept Mr. Letymers, I bought this book, when the Testament was abrogated, that shepherds might not read it. I pray God amend that blindness. Writ by Robert Williams, keeping sheep upon Seynbyr Hill, 1546."—"Our Protestant Forefathers," by W. S. Gilly, D.D.)

EXCELLENCE OF THE PRAYER BOOK.

Every member of the Church of England possesses in the Book of Common Prayer, a safeguard against error of doctrine; a guide to Christian knowledge, which will avail him at home as well as at Church; a manual of private as well as public devotion. And observe here the advantage which they who cannot read derive from the constant repetition of the same service every Sabbath-day. It is by that very repetition, that the unlearned are taught to pray; it is thus that they learn prayers by art, and are enabled both to take their part in the public worship of God, and also to address him "secretly in their chamber." It is thus, (if at all), that "line upon line, precept upon precept," of Christian duty, is instilled into their minds. Instances of this important result are constantly witnessed by every parochial minister. The following is strongly impressed on my recollection. On my first visit to a woman in the work-house, who was bedridden, and of a great age, I read two or three prayers from a collection, recently published, which I happened to have with

me. She listened with attention, and devoutly said, Amen. But, when I took up the Prayer Book, and began to read the general confession, nothing could exceed the satisfaction which she shewed; she repeated every sentence with me, from memory, with a loud voice, and continued to do the same, in several other prayers, which I added from the Liturgy. "Ah! (she said, when I had finished,) these are the prayers I love: they are what I learnt by hearing them so often at church; for I'm no scholar, I was never taught to read; they are the prayers which have served me all my life; they are my comfort, while I lie on this bed." I can add, with great truth, that this "comfort did not fail her to the last." She died a few months ago. There is no reason why I should conceal her name, and the mention of it will give additional interest to the fact, in the minds of some of my readers. It was Susan Cook.—Rev. Sir H. Oakley's Address to his Parishioners.

The Garner.

GOOD WORKS.

Good Works are in no respect, in the covenant of grace, the condition of requiring a right to justification and salvation: they are not such a condition, either in whole or in part; in that quality they are not necessary. Nay, in that quality they are insupportable. This is a truth, and a truth important in the highest degree, which has always been acknowledged and advanced by all the orthodox; but which has not always been sufficiently urged and sufficiently improved, when the opportunity offered. All this, however, does not hinder good works from being in the covenant of grace a real condition, and a condition absolutely necessary. But it is a condition parallel to that which obliges a beloved child to render to his father, to the utmost of his power, a respectful and filial obedience,—an obedience not forced nor peevish, but paid with alacrity, and having no mixture in it of any thing servile or mercenary. Works, then, are a condition of homage and acknowledgment, in the same sense and with the same restriction as an annual rent, with which a landed estate is charged, is a condition that a donee must fulfil in order to retain legitimately that which he possesses by the sole liberality of the donor, and which he has not previously merited by his services.—Ch. Naudé de Pere.

PRAYER.

Prayer draws all the Christian graces into its focus; it draws charity, followed by her lovely train, her forbearance with faults, her forgiveness of injuries, her pity for errors, her compassion for want. It draws repentance, with her holy sorrows, her pious resolutions, her self-distrust; it attracts faith, with her elevated eye—hope, with her grasped anchor—beneficence, with her own hand—zeal, looking far and wide to serve—humility, with introverted eye, looking at home. Prayer, by quickening these graces in the heart, warms them into life, fits them for service, and dismisses each to its appropriate practice. Cordial prayer is mental virtue: Christian virtue is spiritual action: the mould into which genuine prayer casts the soul is not effaced by the suspension of the act, but retains some touches of the impression till the act is repeated.—Mrs. Hannah More.

CONVERSION.

There is a certain period in the life of every sincere christian, at which he becomes the subject of an inward change, the effect of the power of God. It began perhaps in fear: it was attended with faint resolutions to amend; and then, by various steps, it ended in a cordial application to Christ, and an unreserved self-dedication to God. Yet all this, perhaps, took place by imperceptible degrees. When the morning succeeds the night, light and darkness are blended in continually different proportions, so that we cannot say when night is ended and day begins.—Rev. Henry Martyn.

CIVIL OBEDIENCE.

If the powers on earth command anything contrary to the express command of God, we are no ways to give a like obedience, for it is better to obey God than man; but we must give passive obedience and suffer, for it is better to suffer than sin, and if we suffer for righteousness' sake happy are we.—But in no ways are we to resist; resistance is absolutely forbidden, and that upon pain of condemnation; and thus even when the powers were tyrannical in passing many oppressive acts; yea, when they were heathenish and idolatrous, commanding many ungodly and profane things; yea, when they were anti-christian, giving out many severe edicts, persecuting Christians, and all who called upon the name of Jesus; this was Paul's Gospel. Such who now teach that Christian magistrates may be resisted, let them consider whether they be not preaching another Gospel than Paul taught, and what is the doom of such.—Archbishop Leighton.

FEMALE CHARACTERS OF SCRIPTURE.

We cannot but be peculiarly struck with the natural and appropriate, as well as beautiful delineation of female character in Scripture. No point is overcharged—no virtue exaggerated. The portrait is the more affecting, because it is so like. It is the gentle, tender, and feeling woman whom we meet with in real life; and though the sublime situations in which she is placed, as well as the language and imagery of Scripture, invest the heroine of the Bible with a peculiar charm, she is not so highly raised above ordinary circumstances as not to provoke our sympathy, and invite our imitation. On this account the illustrations of the sacred volume are of the highest value. The female Christian who is familiar with them needs few other models. Besides the chasteness and simplicity which characterise these examples, there is a detail about them which is not only graphically true, but practically instructive. It is not merely by their prophetic visions or inspired songs that we are made acquainted with the female worthies of the ancient church; we converse with them in their homes; we see them in the discharge of family and social functions; and we find in general, that those who were the most highly honored by divine favor were the most blameless and amiable, according to our ideas of female excellence.—Mrs. John Sandford.

Advertisements.

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By the REV. A. N. BETHUNE, Rector of Cobourg.

29—4w.

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JAMES M. STRACHAN.

Toronto, 8th October, 1838. 18 3m

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The Church

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