

the poetry of my brother Charles, but in my opinion this is the sweetest hymn he ever wrote."

No higher compliment to Charles Wesley's poetic genius could be paid than that implied in the almost universal appropriation of his hymns. There has scarcely been a collection of hymns designed for congregational use published for the last hundred years but has contained a considerable number from the pen of the Minstrel of Methodism. One of his pieces, that popular Christmas carol :

"Hark, the herald angels sing,"

has even found its way into the Book of Common Prayer ; how, nobody knows, and efforts have been made to have this Methodist taint expunged, but so far in vain.

One mark of genuine muse is the naturalness, spontaneity and perennial flow of its effusions. Our poet is no wan-faced student with a countenance "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," wasting his life under the flicker of the midnight lamp to produce a few laboured lines, or climbing with toilsome steps the flowery steeps of Parnassus. On the contrary, he "sings because he must, and pipes but as the linnets sing." His hymns are not like petrifications slowly formed, and at best cold and glittering; they come up naturally, unsought, like wild flowers, to bloom in open day ; or, like a fountain, to pour a silvery tide in lavish bounty, for no other reason than that it is too full to contain itself.

Poetry was a passion with him. When a youth at the University of Oxford, he would sometimes rush into his brother's room, repeat some verses that had just struck him, and then retire in the same precipitate manner. From the time he began versifying his thoughts flowed in numbers. His muse seems constantly to have felt her kindling fervours. The fire of which his hymns are but sparks, is not the momentary flash of a meteor, nor yet the shifting phantasy of the aurora ; it is "steady as the brightness of a lamp and constant as the fire of the Magi." Nothing could curb his poetic Pegasus. Neither labour nor affliction prevented him from cultivating and exercising his talent for poetry. In his journal, for instance, occurs the following characteristic entry : "Near Ripley, my horse threw and fell upon me. My companion thought I had broken my neck, but my leg only was