

subtle agent, it has made it the vehicle of thought, along the magic wire: thus annihilating time and space, and enabling persons, thousands of miles distant from each other, to converse familiarly, as if face to face. Nor is its power less visibly displayed in that invention which caused the little birch canoe, which, but a few years since, glided unobscured over the surface of our own loved Ontario, to be supplanted by the noble steamer, which now in majesty

"Walks the waters like a thing of life,
And seems to dare the elements to strife."

In this we recognise an effective agent, in the intellectual and moral elevation of the human family. Laden with the elements of civilization, it penetrates the hitherto inaccessible parts of the earth. "till, even the death-betrodden gales of the Niger yield to the force of scientific enterprise; and the fountains of the Nile emerge from the awful obscurity of six thousand years." But, great as have been the conquests of mind in bending the elements of nature to its chariot-wheels, still methinks wonders not yet conceived would be revealed, could we but pierce the veil of futurity.

Not only was this beautiful world, with its numberless sources of enjoyments, created to promote its happiness, and the expansion of its mighty powers, but when the mind, prostrated by its fall, lay in helpless ruins, the infinitely glorious Creator proclaimed its value by sending His only Son to redeem and restore it. God has thus invested the mind with a dignity that must command the respect of the brightest seraphs that wait around His throne. The mind, endowed by its Creator with powers susceptible of endlessly progressive improvement, is ever advancing. To-day an infant appears on earth—gradually light shines in upon that infant soul. Behold the kindling eye, as truths new and strange are grasped by its expanding powers. The wonders of nature and science are revealed to his penetrating glance as he springs into manhood. To-morrow that infant is a Newton. At the bidding of his herculean energies, mystery after mystery unfolds its hidden depths. We look again. That infant is an angel now. Clay organs no longer cloy its powers, nor impede its onward flight. Age after age rolls away, and still its course is upward; and its powers expanding, grasp more and more of God, till arrived where Gabriel stood, when, like the opening flower, it sipped the first dew-drops of knowledge. And yet it pauses not, but onward and upward speeds its dazzling course, where

"Floods of living knowledge roll,
And pour and pour upon the soul."

OLD SONGS.

BY ELIZABETH YOCATT.

[CONCLUDED.]

Once more the woman's shrill voice rose up, mingled with the pattering of the rain against the casement, and penetrated home after home in vain; there was no kindred echo in the hearts of those who heard it. A veteran author, whose thoughts came slower than they were wont, what with age and poverty, and the *incubus* which weighs ever on those who are forced to coin poetry into bread—wearied and annoyed, sent down word that if she did not move on, he would give her in charge. But upon his wife's observing that it was a terrible night to be abroad in, qualified the command by a few half-pence, and the half of their frugal supper.

"After all," said he, with a smile, "it is easier writing songs here by our bit of fire (and it was but a bit), than singing them in the cold, wet streets." A blessing surely rested on his poetry that night.

Again the ballad-singer passed on, and her voice had more of melody in it. The kind face and gentle words of the poet's wife had done her good, beside providing for the wants of the present hour; and the poor, happily for them, in one sense, seldom look beyond. Presently the door of a respectable house opened, and a young woman, decently dressed, beckoned her forward, and slipped a shilling into her hand, observing that it was a wild night. The ballad-singer looked up astonished at

receiving so much, and saw by the lamp-light traces of tears recently shed on the thin cheek of her benefactress. The young woman shook her head when she offered her one of the ballads which she had been singing, declaring with a sigh that she knew it by heart; and interrupting her thanks and blessings by again closing the door, went back into her little parlor, and leaning her head upon her hands, wept long and bitterly.

A love of country, as well as kindred and friends, is indissolubly linked with old songs. The Swiss, although not in general a people of great susceptibility, are said to be peculiarly alive to this feeling; and also the Irish and Scotch, more especially the latter. How touching it is to hear home-songs in a strange land!—the simple melodies of childhood, hundreds and hundreds of miles away, like the sweet voices of familiar friends. Terpander, the Lesbian musician, is said to have quelled an insurrection in Lacedæmon by his songs. "Who has not heard or read," says a late author, "of the extraordinary effects of the Jacobite airs, so associated with the cause in which they had been such powerful agents, that even still they make the blood to tingle, and the heart to throb? and that enthusiasm which flew like the electric spark through every rank wherever the Marseilloise hymn was heard—a whole audience rising simultaneously, and amidst the waving of handkerchiefs, and gestures of devotion, joining heart and voice in the national anthem—regiments dropping on their knees, and as it were, solemnly devoting themselves to the cause in which they were engaged!—or the *Rans des Vaches*, upon the hearing of which expatriated Swiss soldiers were wont to melt into tears—many deserted—others fell ill—and not a few actually died, it is said, of mere home-sickness?"

We are told by Mr. Malone, that one night, when Sir Joshua Reynolds was at Venice, the manager of the Opera, in compliment to the English gentlemen there, ordered the band to play an English ballad tune. It happened to be a parlor air, which was played or sang in every street at the time of their leaving London; and by recalling to mind that metropolis, with all its connexions and endearing circumstances, brought tears into the artist's eyes, as well as into those of his countrymen who were present. In all this the spell lies simply in the old song, hallowed by memory and association.

Religion, also, has her old songs—the Canticles, that "songs"—as the name so sweetly signifies "the most beautiful song!" And more ancient still, when Moses sang at the head of the tribes, after the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, Miriam's Song. The Songs of David, the Song of the Angels, the Song of Zion, began on earth, and perfected in Heaven. A theme full of holy and beautiful thoughts and imaginings—hauntings of a glorious immortality, but all too sacred for our present paper. Hymns are a kind of spiritual song, the influence of which are perhaps more lasting than any other kind of uninspired melody. We learn them in childhood, and in old age their memory comes back to gladden and to bless us. We lisp them at a mother's knee, and murmur them on a dying-bed. A hymn is often among the last things retained by the fading memory—the last sound upon the trembling lips;—like "Much-a-fraid," in the "Pilgrim's Progress," we pass through the river singing.

It is astonishing the pertinacity with which old songs linger in the heart, long after things that seemed of far more importance have been forgotten. The aged man, looking dimly back upon childhood's hardly-acquired love, remembers little else save its songs. We can well recollect such an one, who for many years filled the professor's chair at Edinburgh, and was justly celebrated as the first classical scholar of his day. But all these things have passed from him now like a dream. It is sad to mark the wreck of that glorious intellect—the wandering mind—the failing memory—and yet he can sing "Auld Robin Gray" throughout, from beginning to end, without missing a word, and with evident appreciation of its sweet and quiet pathos.

And now we hasten to conclude a paper over which a few may smile, while the many will bear witness by their tears to its deep truth—and it may be, even the sceptics become followers of our simple creed; when the songs, warbled night after night