

# The BEREAN.

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

No. 6.]

QUEBEC, THURSDAY, MAY 9, 1844.

[Vol. I.]

## Poetry.

### JACOB'S STAFF.

"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." (Heb. xi. 21.)

Jacob, a pilgrim to the last,  
Leaned on the staff that bore him home;  
While faith her glance prophetic cast,  
As life's last sands were ebbing fast,  
And hope replied—Lord Jesus, come!

Once with his staff—'twas all he had—  
He wandering passed o'er Jordan's tide;  
But he who makes the outcast glad,  
And pours his brightness o'er the sad,  
Two godly companies supplied.

And, now that Jordan's mystic ford  
Swolled high, and heaven was near in view,  
Still resting on the promised word,  
Faith Abraham's faithful God adored,  
And grasped that oft-tried staff anew.

Pilgrim! who wendest life's rough road,  
Take but the staff which Faith supplies;  
From Haran's wild to Jordan's flood  
'Twill ease thee under every load,  
Nor fail thee till thou reach the skies.

S. C. W.

(From the Christian Observer.)

### FASHIONABLE CIRCLES.

From the Rev. Dr. Clarke's Walk about Zion.

[The original has the initials O. V. for the Clergyman's name. We have coined the name of Orvin, simply to remove the awkwardness caused by meeting those initials, when a piece is read aloud by one, for others to hear, who are very much hindered by them from entering into the spirit of the narrative.—EDITOR.]

A number of years since, the Rev. Mr. Orvin was settled in a country village, far in the interior. At the time to which I advert, he and the church over which he presided, were suffering under the heavy charge, of favouring gay and worldly amusements. "Such a man," it was said, "could have no piety! such a church could have nothing more than the form of godliness, and hardly that."

The ground of all this denunciation, was, at most, but an act of imprudence on the part of Mr. Orvin, and there were connected with this act several redeeming circumstances.

This Reverend gentleman was young and highly talented. Till the event just adverted to, no one had doubted his piety. His pungent and faithful exhibitions of divine truth, had brought many awakened sinners to the foot of the cross. Among these, was a large number of young persons. They had broken away from their former gay associates, and taken an open stand on the side of the Lord.

Those former associates, however, were constantly devising expedients to draw them back again within the fatal whirlpool of worldly pleasure.

It was during one of the summer months—a season when the country has peculiar charms, and the deep grove, with its cool refreshing shade, seems like another Eden, contrasted with the heat and suffocating air of the town—that several of the persons above alluded to, proposed a walk of some two miles into the country, for the purpose of having a sort of rural entertainment in a shady retreat well known in that neighbourhood. The whole thing was unquestionably got up for the purpose of festive hilarity and enjoyment. This was not, however, the aspect under which the matter was presented to the young members of the church who were invited to join the party. Still, their sense of propriety was such, that they declined the invitation. To overcome this backwardness on the part of those who had united themselves with the people of God, a committee waited upon Rev. Mr. Orvin, and extended to him a pressing invitation to meet the assembled party at the place appointed for rendezvous.

At first, he promptly declined; but when the invitation continued to be pressed, and he received the assurance that every thing would be conducted with the most strict regard to decorum and propriety, he at length yielded to their importunity and consented to go, remarking, however—

"If I go, I must go in the character of a minister of Christ, and you must not be surprised, if I speak to you in reference to my Master's business."

To this they readily assented. The great point was now gained. The news flew through the village like wild-fire, that the Rev. Mr. Orvin was to be one of this party. The invitations were reiterated to the young members of the church, accompanied with the invincible argument, "Surely, there cannot be the slightest impropriety in going, since the minister is to be there." In most instances, the argument was successful.

The company were soon on their way, eager to reach their place of destination, where so much pleasure was anticipated.

The spot selected for this rural recreation, was truly picturesque. An area of several acres had, many years previous, been partially cleared up, so that the earth was covered with thickly matted grass, which appeared like a firm and unbroken carpet of green. There had been left a sufficient number of the ancient giants of the forest, spreading abroad their lofty and leafy branches, to furnish a perfect and delightful shade, to the assembled group.

The scenery around them was uncommonly fine. On the east there stretched away, as far as the eye could extend, a dense, and deepening forest; and on the west, there rose in the immediate vicinity a precipitous mountain, whose top reached to the very clouds. Around its base, separating it from the plot of ground, where the party were assembled,

flowed a beautiful stream, whose gliding waters catching, by reflection, the color of the verdant foliage that overhung the bank of the stream, presented in its course, as far as the eye could follow it, a rippling surface of deep emerald. On the north and south were caught, here and there, through the openings in the trees, views of a rich, and finely cultivated country.

The whole company were now assembled, and began to make preparations for their repast. There was all of the usual quantum of glee, hilarity, and mirth.

To this scene of rural gait, Mr. Orvin was now directing his steps. As he wended his solitary way through grove and field, and was passing along thoughtfully by the side of a bramble, a voice suddenly cried out—

"Ah—ah, I am sorry you are going there!"

Startled from his reverie, he looked up, and saw an old woman of homely appearance, in the act of picking berries. He fixed his eye upon her for a moment, and immediately recognised in her one of his communicants, who was very poor, and supported herself, during the summer months, principally by gathering fruit in this way, and bringing it to market.

When Mr. Orvin was sufficiently recovered from the momentary surprise into which he was thrown, he replied—

"My good friend, is it you?"

Intent on the idea which had taken possession of her mind, the simple hearted woman could neither hear, nor think, of any thing else, and she again uttered her lamentation—

"Ah, I did not think that you would go there!"

"Go where?" said Mr. Orvin.

"Why to meet those frolicsome young folks: a deal of hurt it will do, I am sure, to the church!"

"And what leads you to think so?"

"Because," said she, "I have heard already many lament over it, and say that Mr. Orvin was coming down from the work of the Lord, and beginning to get into worldly amusements."

"They are greatly mistaken, my friend," said he.

"Well, well," she replied, "I heard a lady say, as I came along, how can Mr. Orvin ever preach any more against the pomps and vanities of the world?"

"Indeed, I shall be truly sorry," responded he, "if my consenting to meet our young friends on this occasion will interfere in the slightest manner with my future usefulness."

"Well, you will see," said she.

Mr. Orvin passed on. A new train of thought had been started in his mind. He began to reflect that, perhaps, he had acted unadvisedly. The inquiry suggested itself, "Whether the scene, though fraught with no special evil to himself, might not exert a deleterious influence upon those whom it had, hitherto, been his great object to lead in the way everlasting? They were constantly exposed to influences calculated to destroy and deaden all spirituality of mind. Would not the step he had taken seem to give countenance to those scenes of amusement, where the very excitement is enough to intoxicate the mind, and bring it under the power of error?"

While indulging in this train of thought, the voices of the gay group broke upon his ear: He was soon in the midst of the party, where every face seemed beaming with animation, and every heart bounding with rapture. The rural board was tastefully arranged, and exhibited every description of delicacies. As soon as the repast was finished, Mr. Orvin, desirous to repair the injury that his appearance at this place might have occasioned, begged the privilege of addressing a few words to the company. The whole group immediately clustered around the spot where he stood. Taking a hymn book from his pocket, he remarked:

"The creator of this beautiful scene, is worthy of praise and adoration. Will you join me in singing a hymn?" He then read two or three verses of the following hymn.

"Should nature's charms, to please the eye,  
In sweet assemblage join:  
All nature's charms would droop and die,  
Jesus, compared with thine."

The whole company united in singing, and their voices sounded amidst this wild woodland scene, as they were prolonged, and died away in faint echo, not unlike the sweet minstrelsy of heaven.

The hymn being closed, the minister knelt down on the grass, and looked up to the Eternal One in prayer. The solemn and affecting manner in which he supplicated the throne of grace, dissipated every feeling of levity, with which any of the group at first gathered around this man of God.—The prayer being finished, he addressed them in a strain of remarkable something like this:

"When two of your number waited upon me, with an invitation to meet you on the present occasion, I yielded to their importunity, with the express understanding, that I should come here as the minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have not come here to frown on your innocent joys, but to say to you in the kind accents of friendship, that you are immortal beings, and that you ought never to lose sight of your high destination, as accountable and undying intelligences. I cannot but hope that there are none in this assemblage,

"Who deem religion frenzy, and the God  
That made them, an intruder on their joys,  
Start at his awful name, or deem his praise  
A jarring note."

"My purpose is not to interrupt your enjoyment, but to direct your thoughts to considerations of high and everlasting importance. Look around upon this scene of nature. He who planted these lofty trees under whose shade you are sitting—who reared up that

mountain, whose summit is lost in the clouds—who rolls along that emerald stream that bathes the mountain's base—who planted yonder sun in the firmament of heaven, and covered yonder forest with its foliage, has said, by the mouth of his inspired prophet:

"We'll do fade as a leaf. And again;  
Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,  
Neither let the mighty man glory in his might,  
Let not the rich man glory in his riches; but  
let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness, in the earth."

"To understand and know God, to be the subject of his loving-kindness, and the partaker through Christ of his righteousness, is an attainment infinitely more desirable, than any possession of earth.

"Youthful beauty is regarded by its young possessor, as a gem of inestimable value. And no one, who has ever gazed upon the finely moulded features, the glowing countenance, the sparkling eye, the symmetrical form dignified in its attitude, and graceful in all its movements, can look with indifference on these marks of beauty, which the Creator sometimes impresses upon the human face and form. No one can question, but that this visible loveliness, which stands combined with one's external existence, is in itself desirable. The Creator meant that it should be regarded as a blessing, and like every other earthly blessing, that it should lift the heart of its possessor with increased gratitude to the source, whence it was derived. But this gem has inscribed upon it, these monitory words: *Look to heaven, there alone blooms immortal beauty.* This earthly possession fades like a leaf. It lasts but an hour. Its existence is as brief and evanescent as the spangled dew drops of morning. The very rays of the bright luminary which impart to those drops their lustre, drink them up.—Disease, death, or continued life itself, shakes blight and mildew upon every opening bud of youthful beauty. Even while we are gazing upon the bright vision, it vanishes away for ever. Who then will be so unwise, as to build his happiness on such a foundation? Who will glory in the possession of this short lived and quickly fading flower, and reject the riches of redeeming grace?"

"We are told that there is in the youthful bosom a redundancy of spirits that seeks to expend itself in all the diversified amusements of the dance and the song, the gay sallies of mirth, and the joyous festivities of the merry meeting. Every benevolent mind must feel a sympathetic throb of delight, in witnessing the happiness of others. But every thing which excites and exhilarates the spirits, does not bring substantial enjoyment.

"Just look into some scene of earthly pleasure, where all is gay and joyous—where every glowing countenance is covered with animation, and every sparkling eye filled with rapture. Will that scene last? Look again: the dance is finished—the song is ended—the company have separated—lassitude and feverish restlessness now sit, like a hateful incubus, upon each individual of that happy group. Disease has fastened upon one of the number: Whither can he now turn for relief? The physician tells him his case is hopeless. Parents and friends gather around his dying couch, and wring their hands in despair: The fell destroyer presses on, regardless of their tears, to overturn and demolish the citadel of life. The shades of evening have gathered around. In the sick chamber, all is lonely, and silent, and noiseless. Then comes over the dying one, like a sickly dream, the recollection of that festive night—of those gay and reckless scenes of vanity, which the children of pleasure are so eager to renew. But O, with what altered feelings are they now viewed! How worthless do they appear, as the veil is lifted up which reveals an untried eternity. How much would that dying one now give for a hope in Christ!"

"Again: there is no period in life more interesting, than that, in which young hearts feel the touch of kindred sympathies, and are held in union by the rosied wreath of love: And there is not on earth a scene more lovely, than that which is exhibited in the domestic circle, where are hourly exchanged, all the kind and endearing offices that are due between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters. This is a scene upon which the benevolent Creator must look with approbation. Still, he did not design that it should last but a few fleeting days, lest the hearts of the sons of men should be turned away from their future residence in the skies.

"We have seen the bride, who stood before the altar in all the bloom of youth, and with the prospect of many long years of happiness before her, in a few short months, bending with sable weeds over the grave of her wedded lover.

"We have seen vice working worse and wider ruin than death; planting thorns, where hope had seen nothing but flowers; leaving in the heart which, a short time before, had been the happy seat of love and joy, nothing but blighted affection and grim despair.

"We have seen families, happy in each others' society, meeting day after day, beneath the same roof, their minds and feelings all in unison, and enjoying an intercourse, so sweet, affectionate, and heavenly, that their dwelling seemed like another paradise. Only a few years elapsed, and the circle was broken up. The hard necessity of uncontrollable circumstances placed between them a distance, scarcely less than the diameter of the earth. The great destroyer of the human race knocked at the door of their distant and separate dwellings; and the daughter felt not on her forehead, through the lingering sickness that preceded dissolution, the soft and soothing hand of a tender mother—

for that hand was already cold in the grave. The son sank beneath the ravages of mortal disease, but the anxious eye of a father looked not on him—the unwearied affection of a sister tended not around his bed: strangers closed his dying eyes, and his grave is in a foreign land.

"And thus I might go on, and show that transitoriness is written upon every object of human possession—that wealth, and knowledge, and honor, will all pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew. In eternity, the possessor of millions will have no need of his wealth, nor the hero of his laurels, nor the statesman of his political science, nor the scholar of his erudition, nor the jurist of his legal acquirements, nor the physician of his medical skill, nor the agriculturist of his knowledge of soils; but the sinner will have infinite need of Christ and his salvation. Most affectionately, therefore, would I entreat you to build your hopes upon nothing beneath the skies. Seek first—seek early—seek in the May morning of your young being, the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other necessary things shall be added thereto."

"Do you shrink away from the thought of assuming the character of a disciple of Christ? Do you imagine that the Christian has a dull and gloomy life? Do you think it will be necessary to mingle in worldly amusements, in order to render life tolerable? Do you suppose that God requires hard things of those whom he calls to be his children? I might ask, in the language of an eloquent author, 'Has the Creator dealt hardly with the papilio because, in consequence of His ordinance, it changes its nature, ceases to crawl on the ground, and mounts aloft in the air, deriving its pleasure from a new source? Has the captive, long a prisoner in the Siberian mines, any reason for accusing his sovereign of barbarity, when his chains are knocked off, and he is restored to the light of day, and to the pleasures of society on the surface of the earth; because he is now separated from those low gratifications to which he was obliged to resort for want of better, while he was confined in subterranean caverns? The objection is built on falsehood; for it supposes the things of the world to be suited to the faculties of an immortal mind, which is made for the enjoyment of God, and which nothing but God, His favor, and friendship can ever satisfy.—But the believer is become, by regeneration, a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. The aspect of all those things, with which he has hitherto been conversant, is now changed. The follies of the world have lost their power of giving him contentment; if, indeed, they can be said to afford it to any person. His hopes and fears, his desires and aversions, his joys and sorrows, arise from new causes, and are directed to new ends. What he receives in lieu of the bubble which he relinquishes, is sterling gold. Had the prodigal son any cause of complaint, when, in consequence of the gracious reception which his father gave him, he was no longer under a necessity of feeding on husks with the swine which his former master had set him to keep? Let the christian, who is enjoying the privileges of his profession, be asked, whether the requisition of renouncing the world be harsh; and whether God, who makes it, be an Egyptian task-master. He will know how to answer the question, by replying, 'I am dead; and my life is hid with Christ in God.'

"Rely upon it, the true christian alone, lives an angelic life here below. If you wish for present and eternal happiness, seek it in God."

"This thrilling appeal produced a deep sensation. The whole company returned to their several homes, with good and serious impressions on their minds.

Though Mr. Orvin, in his intercourse with this gay young party, certainly acted like a minister of Jesus Christ, I presume that the reader will think, that it would have been prudent for him to have declined the invitation altogether. For taking this step, a load of censure was unsparingly heaped upon him, and the church of which he was the pastor, was denounced as destitute of piety.

In relation to worldly conformity, and indulgence in worldly amusements, ministers and christians, in the view of the Author, cannot use too much caution. The rule is a good one, never to go to any scene, or place, where Jesus Christ would not be a welcome guest.

The idea of mixing with the giddy and frivolous, in all their varied rounds of amusement, to exert a restraining influence upon them, and show them that religion is not gloomy, is abundantly preposterous. They who take this course, are almost always borne along with the current, and led to participate in all the extravagance and worldliness of those who are 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.' There is not one instance in a hundred, where even the Christian minister, in such a scene, can cause those around him to remember, that his great business is, to win souls to Christ. Were ministers able to do this, and were it considered decorous to speak of eternal things, in those fashionable circles, where their presence is now frequently sought—were they to go with the spirit, and decision, and fearlessness of young Orvin, they would soon cease to be welcome guests in those circles. The reason that their society is now sought, is, that there is a tacit understanding, that they will not open their lips on the subject of Christ, and his salvation.

If worldliness is to be shut out from the church—if Zion is to stand, like a city upon a hill, full of light and glory, then all the professed people of God must be willing to be singular—must be willing to 'come out and

be separate from the world.' We cannot be true disciples of Christ, unless we are willing to take up our cross and follow Him.—And my earnest prayer to God in behalf of Zion is, that there may be among professing Christians, an increased willingness to give up all for Christ, and have, for the one great object for which they live—the glory of God.

## REVIVALS.

### TESTIMONY BY TWO BISHOPS.

It is now nearly thirteen years since a very remarkable work of grace occurred, in the Military Academy of the United States. During a condition of almost universal infidelity to religion and of wide-spread infidelity, against which the efforts of the ministry of one man, set for the defence of the gospel, seemed for a long time to make not the least way; suddenly almost, in a very few days, many minds, without communication with one another, and without personal intercourse with the Minister, appeared deeply, and almost simultaneously interested in the great matters of eternal life. Officers as well as cadets participated in this, and to such an extent, that the minister's study was soon occupied every evening with assemblies, composed of both, for prayer and the exposition of the Word of God; and a serious impression, more or less deep and abiding, was spread over a large part of the whole military community. Several became at that period very decided soldiers of Christ. Many others received impressions then, which God has since ripened into manifest and energetic piety. Many more received the seed of the word, in whom, though it seemed to die, it has since, under the continued influence of the Spirit, sprung up and brought forth fruit. Some are still in military life. Others have been, long since, adorning the Christian profession in the ministry of the gospel.

The very first appearance of this work of grace, so remarkably and singularly the work of God, was the coming of a cadet, alone and most unexpectedly, to introduce himself to the Chaplain, and unburthen the sorrows of a contrite heart. All around him was coldness and scepticism. To speak decidedly in favour of religion, was then so unusual in the Academy that it made one singular. To converse with the Chaplain on that subject, had not yet been ventured by any, except out of opposition to the truth. That any would appear there seriously seeking eternal life, even the Chaplain was afraid to hope. But the darkest of the night is nearest the dawn. A cadet did venture to come, in open day, to the Chaplain's study too deeply concerned to heed what would be said of him. He was personally unknown to the Chaplain. His message he tried to utter but could not. Again he tried, and again; but the heart was too full for speech. At length it was: 'tell me what must I do—I have come about my soul. I know not what I want—I am entirely in the dark. What must I seek? where must I go?' Such was the first declaration of one who for some days, had been awakened under the preaching and reading of the truth. A sermon preached on the Scriptures, and a tract, sent at a venture, from the Chaplain's study to whomsoever it might meet, had been blessed to his soul.\* Doubts and cavils were all abandoned. Implicit submission seemed his engrossing principle. From that moment, the young man appeared to take up the cross, and to stand decidedly and boldly on the Lord's side. The singular and very prominent evidence of the hand of God in this case, was very greatly blessed to others. By and by, he professed Christ in the sacrament of Baptism, which was administered to him, with others, recently turned to the Lord, in the chapel of the Military Academy, and in presence of all the corps. After graduating at that institution and leaving the army, he passed through a regular course of study for the holy ministry, and was successively ordained Deacon and Presbyterian. Many years have since elapsed. The Chaplain has since been called to a higher order in the ministry, and more enlarged responsibilities in the church. The Cadet, meanwhile, after many vicitudes of active duty and of disabling ill health, supposed he had settled himself for the rest of his life, as a preacher and pastor to an humble and obscure congregation of negroes, whom he had collected together from neighbouring plantations; to whom, living entirely upon his own pecuniary means, he appropriated a part of his own house for a church, and to whose eternal interests he had chosen cheerfully and happily to devote himself, as their spiritual father, with no emolument but their salvation. But such was just the true spirit for the highest of all vocations in the church. To be a servant of servants, is the very school in which to prepare for the chief ministry under him who took on him the form of a servant. The church needed a Mission-

\* The tract was sent by a cadet, who in obedience to the request of a pious father, of whose death he had just heard, had come to introduce himself to the Chaplain. He was not then of a serious mind in religion. A tract was put into his hand for himself; another, as bread upon the waters, with the direction "drop it any where in the barracks; perhaps I shall hear from it." He smiled, promised compliance, and dropped it, it unseen, in the room of his friend, the cadet above named. That day a week, the chaplain heard from it, as related in the discourse. But still he who dropped it was not known to care for his soul. The other, having learned from the Chaplain to what cadet he was so indebted, put a pious book in his way—(Gregory's Letters on the Evidences, Doctrines and Duties of Christianity.) Soon they were in prayer together in private. Soon, he who was first in Christ presented the other, as one seeking the peace of God, at the place where the prayers of cadets were then wont to be made, (the Chaplain's study.) One of them is now a Bishop; the other, a most beloved minister of the Gospel, well known as the devoted and successful Pastor of one of the largest flocks of the Diocese of Virginia.