

GENERAL LITERATURE.

HOMELY HINTS.

While perusing Old Humphrey's volume, published by Mr. Carter, entitled *Homely Hints*, my attention was peculiarly attracted by the sections of general application. The combined simplicity and pathos, with the truthfulness of Old Humphrey's delineations of man, in his individual experience, and in his social relations, are not less vivid and impressive than they are graphic and edifying. I have selected one sketch of our earthly pilgrimage for the perusal of your friends, to which every heart and mind must add the corroborative testimony, that the author, in portraying himself, also has depicted the thoughtful reader.

DISAPPOINTED HOPES.

From the cradle to the grave we occupy tenfold more time in wishing for what we have not, than in enjoying that which we have. Where we once offer up praise for benefits received, we twenty times petition the Father of mercies to add to the number of gifts he already has bestowed.

There is a restless discontent that seems to cling to us like a leprosy. Give a child an apple in each hand, and he will want the one that remains on the table; and give a man thousands of gold and silver, and tens of thousands will become the object of his desires. Experience warrants the belief, that the possession of Europe and Asia would excite a yearning in our hearts for Africa and America; and that if to those the moon could be added, we should never rest in peace until we had obtained the sun.

As it was in our childhood and youth, so has it been our manhood. Object after object has been attained with no better success. As he who picks up shells on the sea shore always has one preferable in his eye than in his hand, so we ever hope to add to our happiness by some new acquisition. This is the case not with one only, but with all.

We have never yet attained one earthly advantage that has given us more than a temporary joy. We have never gained aught that has satisfied our desires. Is this your experience? I know it is. It is mine. It is the experience of us all. We have all blown our bubbles, and ran after butterflies, in our childhood, our youth, and our manhood. The bubble has burst, and the caught butterfly has been crushed, not yielding us half the satisfaction that they did when in the air.

Who is there among us who can look back through the vista of threescore years, without wondering that, being so frequently deceived, he could so confidently trust the empty promise of future joy? It is in vain we try to deceive ourselves—

"Fortune may favour, Fancy may beguile,
Hope wave her golden wings, and sweetly smile;
But sad Experience, with a brow o'ercast,
Sighing with grief, and pointing to the past,
Whispers, the fair illusion to destroy,
That joy unclouded is not earthly joy."

When we were young, there was some excuse for us; but what excuse have we now? I speak to those who have gray hairs on their heads; and to those who have no hair at all.

The homely adage tells us that "old birds are not caught with chaff." If this be true, *old birds are wiser than old men*. Shame upon us; but we are continually forgetting the good gifts of God, and pursuing objects which are no better than chaff when they are attained.

Did you ever reckon up God's mercies? or did you ever try to reckon them? for they are more in number than the hairs of our heads,

and show our unthankfulness and discontent.

God has given us a body, soul, and spirit, endowed with rare capacities and powers of enjoyment, and placed us in a world of beauty, wherein we cannot tell whether the earth beneath our feet, or the sky above our head, is the most glorious to gaze on.

For us the flowers of spring unfold themselves, and the fruits of autumn hang in clusters on the trees. The sun gilds our path by day, and by night a thousand glittering lamps are hung in heaven. God has given us dominion "over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

But not to earth's contracted span alone has he limited his goodness. He has given us his holy word, abounding in exceedingly great and precious promises for those who fear, love, and obey him, and who delight in his mercy. We have tranquil Sabbaths, and a throne of grace, and seasons of prayer, and the influences of his Holy Spirit, to increase our consolations, to brighten our hopes, and to confirm our faith in the reality of eternal things. What he has bestowed here cannot be fully described; "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared" in another world for his people. They have "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

These are a part only of the innumerable gifts of God; and yet in the midst of this unbounded profusion we dare to be unthankful! Though God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life, "we ungratefully live in a spirit of continual repining."

Experience presents to my memory too many human beings repining in sickness, who were never grateful in health; too many complaining of God's judgments in adversity, who never acknowledged his mercy in the day of their prosperity. Surely, if we blame the hand that smites us down, we should honour the arm which raises us up. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

But the spirit of unthankfulness that seems to mingle with our very marrow and our bones, is as impolitic as it is unjust. Should a beggar starve with a budget of provisions at his back? or a man die of thirst with a fountain bubbling at his feet? We should gratefully enjoy what God in goodness has bestowed, and try to be content with such things as we have: for a "contented mind is a continual feast."

When we hear of Napoleon passing his days as a captive on a rock, because he was not content to sit as a conqueror on a throne—when we read of Alexander blubbing like a boy who has lost his marble, because he had no other world to conquer, we indulge in some sapient reflections, and exclaim against the unthankfulness of power, and the unreasonableness of ambition; but are we not acting the same censurable part continually, in undervaluing the blessings we possess, and eagerly pursuing what is but as "chaff which the wind driveth away?"

Let us turn our attention to the costliness of a contented spirit; and if we cannot be satisfied with what we have, let us try to get more of God's grace, that we may have a brighter hope of sharing his glory.

A heron with sable plumes and its attendants are now slowly passing my window.—How silently, but yet how eloquently, do they set forth the emptiness of worldly pursuits, compared with the value of eternal things! I close with the prayer—would

that its spirit was as familiar as the world's!—
"O God, who hast prepared for them who love thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

[From the Christian Guardian.]

ELEVATED VIRTUOUS CHARACTERS.

It indeed is a very agreeable and important truth, that, as social and moral beings, we find a peculiarly profitable and solemnly pleasing employ in the contemplation of elevated virtuous characters,—in tracing and delineating the life, the honoured pathway of the pious and devoted Christian and way-worn pilgrim, "who walked not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" though he sleep, amid the awful, the death-like silence of the cemetery, beneath the clouds of the valley.

Thus, who, in the perusal of the life of an immortal Wesley, views him engaged in his varied acts of kindness and deeds of Christian charity, contemplates him in his almost superhuman agency, with zeal and apostolical success, beating back the powers of darkness—tearing away the drapery of night, which had thrown its darksome pall around the moral heavens and o'er the Christian world—as with the hollow voice of seven-fold peals of bursting thunder, sounding loud and long the alarm in Zion, and arousing the Church from her lengthened slumbers,—causing the mighty rumbling of the gospel car to be heard; securing embryo events which, when matured, were destined, under God, to rock the world; and carving thus his name on the topmost point of the temple of fame and Christian glory, destined to be read of all men in all succeeding ages;—who, we say, that dwells upon these excellencies, but imbibes a portion of his spirit!—Who that carefully peruses the pious lives of holy men, as Taylor, Fletcher, a Clarke, or a Bramwell, a Cox, or a Kirke White, but catches the same spirit—feels their zeal afresh to burn, their love enkindle, and all their Christian graces assimilating into theirs in proportion as they continue more or less intensely the holy employ!—From these immortal worthies we may descend, and in every virtuous trait of diversified Christian character or characters which the pious contemplative mind, in its onward march, may meet, does it regale itself,—lingers, plucking thence fresh laurels that swell its present attainments; and all of which, as wreaths, shall deck the brow of immortals, when this frail tabernacle shall be dissolved, and when angels, archangels, and men, heaven and earth, in sweet scraphic strains, shall join and make heaven's concave ring, while

"By turns they shout the bursting joy,
And all eternity employ
In songs around the throne."

R. HARDEN.

March 9th, 1844.

JAMES MONTGOMERY, ESQ.

This sweet poet and truly good man, says a correspondent, is now, we believe, nearly seventy years of age, yet his verse lacks none of the beauty and chasteness of expression which distinguished the earlier outpourings of his muse. If it has not all the fire and terseness of his more youthful efforts, their absence is amply atoned for by a higher and more solemn cast of thought. In 1828, being then on a visit to England, we spent two weeks with Mr. Montgomery at Sheffield, in the amiable and quiet family, in which, for the last thirty or forty years, he has been domesticated. He was then employed in writing the "Pellecan Island," the last and perhaps the best of his larger poems. Since then he has had conferred