

## THE BONNY WOODS O' BLAIR.

A Ballad on an incident in the Rebellion of 1745.

## PART I.

Oh weary fa'! Oh weary fa'!  
This fechtin' for the crown,  
It matters na' which o' the twa  
Is either up or down.

But O my leddy's loyal zeal!  
For Charlie a' would dare,  
While I'm but vexed to bid farewell  
To th' bonny woods o' Blair.

And a' day lang she will maintain  
I'm bound by honour's laws,  
To draw my sword to test again  
His hopeless ruined cause:

For wi' the sangs o' loyalty  
Her heart's in sic a flame,  
She ne'er dreams she may widow'd be  
And driven frae hoose an' hame.

There's wailings wheresoe'er I gang,  
O' herts o'erburden'd sair  
And sad forebodings heard amang  
The bonny woods o' Blair.

My mither, wha's been wi' the deid,  
These thirty years an' mair,  
Cam back yestreen to my bed heid  
And three times cried "Beware—"

"For on the block ye're sure to dee  
Gin this deed ye shall dare  
And never, never mair ye'll see  
The bonny woods o' Blair."

Yet so my leddy's love I prize,  
Nocht else wi' can compare,  
To seem a coward in her eyes  
My spirit couldna bear—

And only for her bonny face,  
Nocht else would mak' me dare  
To risk defeat, death, and disgrace  
And the bonny woods o' Blair.

Oh weary fa'! Oh weary fa'!  
This fechtin' for the crown  
Sae I maun up aff an' awa'!  
To pu' King Geordie down.

## PART II.

My lord is to the wars awa';  
While a' nicht through a freet  
My leddy walks the castle ha',  
Or sits her down to greet,

A fearfu' throbbin's in her breast,  
Nor will her hert keep still,  
A' crowns she'd gie but to get free  
Frae thoughts o' coming ill—

And aye she says, while tears down fa',  
"Oh I was sair to blame!  
To drive my loving lord awa'  
To risk a death o' shame.

"He'd stayed at hame only for me,  
And yet I urged him sair,  
And oh but he was wae to lea'  
The bonny woods o' Blair;

"His mither in my dreams I see  
Come from her grassy lair  
And sadly she does look on me  
Foreboding dool and care.

"I'll seek the seer fate's book to read  
And learn what's written there,  
For O this fear, this doubt and dread  
Are more than I can bear."

And she has mounted on her steed—  
A bay o' beauty rare,  
And leaves behind her at full speed,  
The bonny woods o' Blair.

She rode till she cam to the Gryffe,  
And passed the Brig o' Weir,  
And roused, as if for death or life,  
The spirit-haunted seer.

"Learn by your mystic art," said she,  
"What fate may have in store  
For one more dear than life to me,  
The husband I adore."

The old man bowed his hoary head,  
And closed his weird-like e'en,  
And in a mournful voice he said,  
"I see a wae fu' scene"—

And to her question he replies,  
"I see the head man there,  
And one, a noble captive, dies  
Far frae the woods o' Blair."

One long, deep sigh her bosom rent,  
Which struggled long to come,  
And not a single word found vent,  
For she was stricken dumb.

Then unto her ain castle ha',  
They sorrowing brought her back,  
Yet a' the way nae tear did fa'  
And not a word she spak;

Nor did she recognise the place,  
But there both day and night  
Sat wi' that silent, woeful face,  
For she was clean gaen gyte!

Not till three days and nights had passed  
And sleep ne'er bowed her e'e,  
That death in pity cam at last  
And kindly set her free.

Yet often 'mong the dew's o' e'en,  
When shadows fill the air,  
A weeping, wandering lady's seen  
Amang the woods o' Blair.

ALEXANDER MCLACHLAN.

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## A PARSON'S PONDERINGS.

WHAT shall I preach about next Sunday? This is a question which, I suppose, occupies most parsons' thoughts early every week. At any rate it does mine just now, as I sit in my study, facing my library. It's no great library, to be sure; a poor parson cannot indulge in that luxury. Luxury, do I call it? Is it not rather a necessity in these days, when the last important work on any debated subject is as necessary to the scholar as the last style of reaper and binder is to the farmer who wants to keep up with the times? Yet a luxury it must remain to the man of slender means. It is rather provoking to have a brother parson, whose purse is longer than one's own, or some learned dignitary remark to one: "Have you read Dr. Tonans' grand new apologetic work, which completely overthrows Professor Molecule's attack on Christianity? If not, you ought to get it; it will only cost you five dollars." Alas! what is a man to do, when he has just been reminded by his wife that Sophie's shoes are worn out, and Johnnie must have a new jacket? Of course Dr. Tonans' book must wait. One can, however, buy Professor Molecule's new work, for that will only cost fifteen or twenty cents, in the cheap popular form. So one can get the latest thought of the day on one side of the question at any rate. Now, what is the reason that I can get Professor Molecule's works so cheap, while Dr. Tonans' is so dear? Is it in accordance with the law of supply and demand? If so, there must be a tremendous demand for Molecule, and a woeful lack of demand for Tonans'. Or is it that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light"?

A parson—who has to furnish his people with at least two discourses every week, who is supposed in those two discourses to give their thoughts a direction for good for the ensuing six days, who must (if he is worth anything) be *au courant* with the varied and turbulent thought of the day—ought to have no meagre library.

Of course, a parson of the type which Goldsmith has immortalized, in the parish priest of

Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,  
with his primitive, patriarchal life, his unworldly calmness, and unsophisticated piety;

And passing rich with forty pounds a year,  
might well be contented with "Paley's Evidences" and a few more old-fashioned tomes on his shelves. But "Sweet Auburn" is a thing of the past: it is a "Deserted Village," indeed, nowadays. And the idyllic pastor is as much out of date as the rustic schoolmaster.

Fancy Sweet Auburn's pastor suddenly transplanted to an ordinary Canadian village or small town; he would be utterly bewildered. Instead of being in the midst of a quiet homogeneous people—bucolic and stolid, happy and hum-drum—among whom he was a king, with only the squire and the schoolmaster as intellectual equals—he would find himself tackling a congregation composed of all sorts and conditions of men, of various nationalities and mental gifts. And then this congregation would be only one of several rival congregations of various names, each striving to get the inside track of the others. Poor man! What would he do? Fancy him, with his pitiful heart and hospitable hearth open to every tramp or confidence man that comes along! Fancy him being bothered with book agents, and with his parishioners enquiring, "What do you think of the Jesuits' Estates Act?" "Are you an advocate of Anti-Poverty and Equal Rights?" "What are you going to do about Prohibition?" "What is your opinion of Evolution?" "What do you think of 'Robert Elsmere' and 'John Ward, Preacher'?" What would the poor man do when he found one part of his flock fascinated by the big drum of the Salvation Army, and another part systematically absenting themselves from church and studying Professor Molecule at home? In the church he would find himself addressing a very mixed assembly. There would be perhaps a few, a very few, as simple-hearted and unlettered as his old parishioners—some much better informed than himself on many points—and the children even of the poor and uneducated attending High School and able to solve algebraical problems and analyze sentences in a way that would have posed his old friend, the rustic schoolmaster.

In one respect only would he find his position unchanged; he would still have to think himself

Passing rich with forty pounds a year,

or its modern equivalent in purchasing power. Poor man! gentleman, Christian, scholar of the antique type! He would find the tale of bricks demanded indefinitely increased, while his stock of straw was no larger than heretofore.

But I have been digressing. The question is, What shall I preach about next Sunday? What are the particular spiritual needs of my congregation just now, the needs which most require to be ministered unto? When I survey them in my mind's eye, and think of the heterogeneous assembly, of the various temperaments, the various grades of education and age, the various conditions of religious and irreligious life, I can really think of no style or subject adapted to all. So the question, What shall I preach about? involves another question which must be first settled, viz., To whom should I preach?

There is dear old Mrs. Green, for instance, with her eighty years of age, and yet still hale and hearty; she is sure to be in her place in church. She is one of the last remnants of Sweet Auburn's emigrants. She and her deceased husband were the founders of this Church some fifty years and more ago. She was always accustomed to a severe, decorous, yet meagre, ritual. She loves the church in which she was born, in which she has always lived, and in which she will die, and nothing could induce her to forsake it for pastures new; but her soul is vexed within her to think it is not exactly, in all respects, like the church of her youth. She loves "Tate and Brady," and even yet cannot quite reconcile herself to "them hymns" and these new "goings on." She loves sermons which depict in glowing colours the everlasting peace and joy that await the elect, of which she feels herself one—and so she is, and deservedly, too, dear old soul! And if the homiletic picture has some dark shades in the background of the sufferings of those who are not of the elect, why they serve only to bring into relief the central figure. It seems almost like sacrilege to ruffle her placid faith, or cross her mental grain in the least degree.

And yet the style of sermon that would be sweet food for her soul would, I fear, be accounted but chaff by her grandson, who will be sitting by her side next Sunday, and who has just graduated at the University, and has arrived home full of honours in Philosophy and Natural Sciences, and who knows that Prof. Robertson Smith and Dr. Marcus Dods and many others, once accounted frightful heretics, are now had in honour.

Then there is Dr. Black, and those like-minded with him—and they are not a few—who come to Church occasionally, once in a while in the forenoon, and spend the rest of the day in studying agnostic literature. These men tell us sometimes in person, sometimes through the press, that the utterances of the pulpit do not meet their spiritual needs, because they do not solve the difficulties which crop up continually in the course of their secular reading. They complain of the "cowardice" of the pulpit in approaching the "doubt" of the pew, and contemptuously hint that the pulpit avoids grappling with these subjects through either ignorance or fear. And yet, if one were to prepare a sermon specially for them the chances are they would not be there to hear it.

Then there are the Browns, who know nothing of modern doubts and modern literature; whose intellectual attainments are meagre, but whose emotions are very warm. Nothing will satisfy these but a sermon after the style of Sam Jones or Dr. Talmage; full of anecdotes, horrible, humorous, solemn, grotesque, tragical and farcical, combined in one spicy compound.

Then there is Mr. Blue, very Protestant, awfully Protestant, who has an unquenchable horror of Popery; who conceives that every change in the service, however slight, however common-sense, "leads to Rome;" who if he sees a new book-marker instead of an old frayed one, thinks the "innovation" was put there by the Pope's orders, and is bound to protest. He can give you a long list of things in which he don't believe, but is hard set to tell you what he does believe.

And then there is young Scarlett, who has lately come from the city, where he was a worshipper at the Church of St. Aloysius, who is never content unless he sees candles, incense, crucifixes and vestments; he sits restless and indifferent under any sermon, unless the word "Church" or "Celebration" occurs continually in it.

And then there are the Greys—steady thorough-going, loyal, God-fearing, earnest: who don't come to find fault, but listen to the sermon in order to absorb what good they can find in it; whose religion is practical rather than polemical. They are loved and respected by all, though some may dub them slow and old-fashioned.

Indeed a Canadian village parson's congregation is a very mixed one, and his course not always smooth. The missionary of a purely rural congregation is not so burdened. Such a congregation is the nearest approach to that of Sweet Auburn. Not that our Canadian farmers are so behind the age: but the similarity of occupation, of political and religious sentiment and of racial origin, which is found in many a Canadian "settlement," breeds a homogeneousness in the congregation which makes it very workable, and has its charm; while the average mental calibre is infinitely ahead of the Hodges of Sweet Auburn.

On the other hand, a city preacher can be a "specialist." No matter what his type of preaching, or style of service or school of thought, there are plenty of people of all kinds to fill all sorts of churches; and each individual will naturally gravitate to that sort of service and preaching which attracts him most. And it is well that it should be so. As long as men's faces and figures differ, just so long will men's tastes and predilections; and the church (to be