

Our Home Circle

A MIDNIGHT HYMN.

The authorship of the following beautiful hymn of trust is unknown. It was found treasured up in an humble cottage in England.

In the mild silence of the voiceless night, When, chased by airy dreams the slumbers flee, Whom in the darkness doth my spirit seek, O God! but there?

And if there be a weight upon my breast— Some vague impression of the day foregone— Scarce knowing what it is, I fly to thee And lay it down.

So if it be the heaviness that comes In token of anticipated ill, My bosom takes no heed of what it is, Since 'tis thy will.

For O! in spite of past and present care, Or anything besides, how joyfully Passes that almost solitary hour, My God, with thee.

More tranquil than the stillness of the night, More powerful than the silence of that hour, More blest than anything; my bosom lies Beneath thy power.

For what is there on earth that I desire, Of all that it can give or take from me? Or whom in heaven doth my spirit seek, O God! but thee?

AN EARLY ITINERANT.

REV. PHINEAS RICE, D. D. The second generation of American Methodist preachers—scarcely inferior to the first—are nearly all passed to their reward. In self-sacrifice, in bold adventure, in tireless toil, in heroism, in devotion to God and the Church, in polemic skill and sturdiness and in success, they were men of whom the world was not worthy.

Among these was the Rev. Phineas Rice, D. D. Nothing is known of his parents, except that they were Calvinistic Baptists, or of his early educational advantages. He was born in Guilford, Vt., March 29, 1786, just after the Revolutionary War, and united with the New York Conference in 1807, at the age of twenty-one.

At an early period in life he was converted, and united, first with the Baptists, and then becoming dissatisfied with their doctrines and usages, with the Methodist Episcopal Church. All his after life he felt the impulse of this early revolution of his ecclesiastical and theological views. The necessity of immersion, as the only mode of baptism, and the dogmas of Calvinism, were dissected by him with relentless logic and overwhelming ridicule.

The early Methodist preachers, absent most of the time from home, and travelling large circuits or districts, with little society, when they met each other sometimes relaxed the constant strain upon their energies by the free indulgence of a rather broad humor. It was a healthy medicine to the souls of men who had been for weeks amid the gravest and most exhausting duties—a freedom of the brotherhood not altogether denied in our day. No man could do his part in this line more thoroughly than Dr. Rice. His wit, humor, and repartee were spontaneous and irresistible. These jets leaped up from a fountain always full. Usually they flowed away sparkling with beauty or rippling with mirthfulness; but on some occasions his wit was tinged with irony. Just after the session of his own and an adjacent conference, at which there had been a pretty free interchange of ministers, one of the preachers from the other conference said to him, "Bro. Rice, we got the best of your conference in the transfer of ministers; the men we got from you are better than the ones we gave you." The truth of this statement was a little annoying, and the quick retort was, "Yes, you cheated us, and we are not going to exchange ministers with you again; the fact is you have the material to cheat us with!"

His sense of honour forbade him to seek place, and he had very little respect for ministers who did it. His emphatic utterance on this subject was: "I never yet sought an appointment; I never intend to. It is not Methodist. I have for years noted those who are everlastingly seeking accommodation, and I honestly believe in the long run they don't fare as well as those who leave themselves entirely in the hands of the appointing power. I would advise every young man, hands off from that business." In conference, on one occasion, alluding to the anxiety of preachers to have city appointments, he said, "I believe the preachers are all anxious to go to heaven, but they want to go by way of New York."

It was formerly the custom of each presiding elder, to represent, not only his district, but each preacher on it. It was always an hour of deep interest when Dr. Rice rose to give his graphic sketches of his men. No man could read character more accurately than he. Peals of laughter or floods of tears seemed equally at his command, and followed each other with surprising quickness, and merging into each other. His portraits were not caricatures, but admirable hits. The facetious quaintness of his remarks was finely set off and made irresistible by the severe gravity of the man. His incisive wit behind the sternness of his manner was a masked battery. Or to change the figure, it was an undertow that swept everything before it. Yet these representations were usually kind and ap-

preciative. If, however, there was among the men on his district a ministerial drone, a mere hanger-on for place and pay, he received as he deserved, unsparring rebuke. He said of one of this class: "He wishes to leave his present appointment. They are agreed, and mutually pray for a divorce."

He took great interest in the young men on his districts. One of his preachers who imagined himself in declining health, proposed to retire from pastoral work. They were riding together and talking of the proposed superannuation. Dr. Rice opposed it because he believed the man able to do full work. The conversation turned upon earlier days, and the brother boasted of his former swiftness of foot and that he was still pretty good at a race. Instantly the presiding elder saw a chance to test the strength and endurance of the brother, and proposed a foot race, declaring his belief that, old as he was, he was the flecter man of the two. The controversy became earnest and warm, and coming to a level place in the road, they tied their horses to a tree, stripped for the race and championship, and a moment after two stalwart Methodist itinerants were seen flying across the plain. The invalid won the race after a long struggle. Panting for breath as he came at last to the goal the discomfited elder cried out, "You sick! You ask a superannuated relation! If you do I will tell the conference all about this race, and they won't grant your request." The sick man kept at his work—he was cured.

Most of the incidents of his early itinerant life are lost beyond recovery. The following has been preserved by an admiring friend with whom he spent a night not long before his death. It occurred at Thunder Hill, in the Catskill range of mountains, more than sixty years ago. The country was newly settled. After preaching in the neighborhood he was invited to be the guest of a newly-married couple, who lived in a little cottage in the wilderness. After the evening repast and prayers, his host said, "You see, Mr. Rice, we have only one bed-room in our house, and that, of course, is occupied by myself and wife; but I have a bed fitted up in my barn for my guests." This intelligence was a relief to the minister who had anxious thought about the possible place of his dreams. With unlighted candle in hand the young man led the way through the woods some forty rods to the barn. It was made of logs rudely put together, was of recent construction and was without doors or fastenings. The bed, however, and all its appointments were of the most approved orthodoxy for sixty years ago. "This is your bed, Mr. Rice," said the host, lighting the candle and putting it down. "I hope you will rest well; we shall breakfast soon after sunrise; good-night." The pioneer preacher, left alone, read a chapter in the Bible; and prayed, then sank into the voluptuous feather bed, saying to himself, "Well, I've nobody to quarrel with here. I'm monarch of all I survey." Of this, before the morning, he was not quite so certain. Ministers are not all like Mr. Wesley, who, after preaching, almost invariably fell asleep in five minutes after retiring. Many find it impossible to cool the fevered brain and check the impetuous current of thought. It was a quiet moonlight September night, the moonbeams were gleaming through the quivering forest leaves and through the open crevices of the log barn and pouring a flood in at the open doorway. It was just the night and that was just the place for wakefulness and thought, slightly suggestive of loneliness and danger; but the shadowed wings are in the forest and stretched over the lonely ones, as verily as they are above the multitude.

It was "noon of night," his eyes were still waking, when there stole out from the depths of a distant ravine the wild, startling howl of a wolf. Immediately a responding howl came from another quarter, that was answered by another and another. Soon the woods resounded with the dismal uproar, until a full chorus echoed along the defiles of the mountains, every moment approaching nearer. What could the beleaguered itinerant do? Get up, dress, run for life, climb to a hiding place in the barn? Alas! there was no escape. To run was to go into the jaws of death; there was no loft in the barn to flee to. He sweat and trembled and prayed, expecting that his end had come. Thirty or forty howling brutes, famished and blood-thirsty, were at the open doorway. He saw them, heard the snapping of their jaws and their gruff snarls as they fought each other. They thrust their heads into the doorway. But above all, there was One who said, "Hitherto, but no further." At dawn of day the disappointed brutes skulked away to their mountain dens, and released their tortured prisoner.

After a sleepless night, there went up to heaven an offering of devout thanks to Him who holds our lives in his hands. In the pulpit he was a man of power. There was a versatility possessed by few. He was commanding in appearance, dignified, grave and self-possessed. There was a great flexibility of voice. At times it was soft and gentle as an Aeolian harp, then sharp and shrill

as a clarion; and then, at the conclusion of an argument, it was like the thunder of a cataract.

Like most of the giants of early Methodism, he delighted in controversy. At almost every sermon some error was tortured by a raking fire. Quick to detect the weakness of an argument, an adept at sophistry, with a keen sense of the ludicrous, a vein of humor so disguised as always to take his audience by surprise, and incisiveness of wit, interwoven with argument and sarcasm; he was irresistible before a popular audience.

At the time when New England, and especially Yale College, was busy with new theories of man's moral freedom, and when the self-directing power of man was seriously called in question by learned divines and professors, and it was insisted that man was under the control of the strongest motives, with no will-power to resist, Dr. Rice, at one of his quarterly meetings, arraigned this error. He reasoned at length, insisted upon the freedom of the will, the self-determining power of man; that with this power man is responsible, and without it he can not be held to answer under a righteous government; that in case the motives on either side are equal, and there be no self-determining power in man, he must inevitably fail to act in either way; that if one of those learned divines should chance to be overtaken in the streets by influences equally attractive in different directions, he must stand there until turned to a mummy. Then to make the theory look ridiculous, amid outbursts of laughter, he drew the picture of a hungry horse, just midway between two stacks of hay, equally good and equally accessible; looking first at one then at the other, feeling the growing pangs of hunger, but the attraction being exactly equal, and the poor horse having no self-control perished for lack of food.

Frequently his preaching was deeply religious. His earnestness was intense, and his appeals pungent. There was stirring thought and deep pathos, and his audiences were moved to tears and thrilled with overwhelming emotions. He seemed unconscious of that quaintness which often compelled his audience to smile through their tears. It was native in him, and it were folly for others to attempt an imitation. On one occasion he was preaching for the writer. It was one of the most sublime and touching sermons I ever heard. It was on the love of Christ. Tears were falling like drops of rain. In the midst of a passage of irresistible force and beauty, and when no one thought of a close of the sermon, he turned to me and asked, "What time is it? Taken by surprise, I looked at my watch and answered, "It is just twelve o'clock." Without another word he said, "Amen. The people want their dinners."

His last appointment was to the Newburg District. But the burden was too great for his strength. He dragged himself to his appointments, a willing soul in a shattered frame. His last Sabbath of active labour was spent in Roundout. No man of less energy and will would have thought of preaching. It was with great difficulty that he reached the pulpit. The text was, "And as he reasoned of righteousness and temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled." He preached with great acceptability, and at times there were some of those sudden and thrilling outbursts of thought and pathos for which his sermons were so remarkable. It was the fitful, final blaze of a light that had shined for half a century amid the altars of God—one of the golden candlesticks.

A few weeks of patient waiting and suffering and the end came. It found him ready. No ecstasy, but confidence and unflinching trust. He said to Bishop James, "I feel that God loves me. I love Jesus Christ, and I trust in his atonement. I have no fear, I have no fear." Rev. Dr. Richardson, his intimate friend of more than half a century, asked him if he had any message to send to his Conference. "No, my life is before them." Nat. Repository

ONLY A CRIPPLE.

The N. Y. Tribune gives the following incident as "true in every detail":

Three or four years ago a half-drunken young fellow, driving furiously along a crowded street, ran over a little child and hurt his spine. The boy was the son of a poor cobbler. His bed was a straw pallet on a garret floor. When the injury was pronounced incurable, he was removed from the hospital to this bed. There was nothing for him to look forward to but years of misery in the filth and half-darkness of the wretched garret. His mother was dead. His father in the shop below could barely keep them from starving. The young fellow who hurt him was sorry, but what could he do? He was a fast clerk on a small salary. Now and then a kindly Irish-woman on the lower floor, as wretched as themselves, would run up to "hearten the creature up a bit"; but that was all. The only view from the square window was a corner of the next roof, and the event of the day for the miserable cripple was to see the cats climb along it, or fight each other.

Foul smells and foul language came up from the rooms below to him. There seemed to be no other possible chance for his life than to die down into still more brutal ignorance and misery, and to go out like an ill-smelling flame into the eternal night.

Now, just at that time a little English lad, who had come with his father to visit the Centennial Exposition, while passing along a quiet street of the city in which the cripple lived, saw some pale-faced children peering at him out of the windows of a large house set back among trees. Over the gate was the name, Children's Hospital. The boy's kindly English heart was touched; he turned and went in, joked and played awhile with the poor babies, and when he went back to his hotel wrote to his mother of the pleasant sunny rooms with flowers in the windows and pictures on the walls, and the motherly nurses taking care of the little children. "I have seen nothing which pleased me better in America," he said. "I will go again and tell you about it when I come home."

He never went home. The gallant little lad was taken back dead to his mother a few weeks later. After the violence of her grief was past, in her many efforts to show her gratitude to the people who had nursed and been kind to her boy, she asked to be allowed to endow a memorial bed in the little hospital which had pleased him so much, and directed that it should be filled with the most miserable, needy case known to the managers. So it came to pass that our little cripple on a warm spring day was carried out of his garret, bathed, and laid on a pure white bed in a sunny, pleasant room. The other children in the ward called to him and made acquaintance; there were toys, books, pictures for them all. The good woman who lifted him smiled at him; he thought his mother must have looked like that. Outside, the maples reddened in the sun and rustled in at the windows, and the robins chirped and built their nests. There were dainty little meals brought to him. There was the best skill the city could command given to effect his cure. Good women with their hearts full of Christ's love came to teach him, and tell him of this unknown Saviour. At his bed head hangs a little card which he probably never has read or understood: "In memory of Richard —, of Sussex, England."

Something this little story hints in a dim way of the infinite inextricable tangle of human lives and their inexorable influence on each other. When the English lad obeyed the generous impulse to give a moment's pleasure to the little children as he passed, how could he tell that he lifted this other life up into the sunshine for all time? "The word that we speak to-day," says the Arab proverb, "shall it not meet us again and again at the turning of the ways to show us how it has cursed and blessed our fellows?"

PROVE IT BY MOTHER.

While driving along the street one day last winter in my sleigh, a little boy six or seven years old, asked me the usual question, "Please may I ride?"

I answered him, "Yes, if you are a good boy."

He climbed into the sleigh; and when I again asked, "Are you a good boy?" he looked up pleasantly and said, "Yes, sir."

"Can you prove it?"

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?"

"Why, my ma," said he promptly.

I thought to myself, here is a lesson for boys and girls. When a child feels and knows that mother not only loves, but has confidence in him, or her, and can prove their obedience, truthfulness and honesty by mother, they are pretty safe. That boy will be a joy to his mother while she lives. She can trust him out of her sight, feeling that he will not run into evil. I do not think he will go to the saloon, the theatre, or the gambling house. Children who have praying mothers, and mothers who have children they can trust, are blessed indeed. Boys and girls, can you "prove by mother" that you are good? Try to deserve the confidence of your parents and every one else.

Mothers, there is another thing for you to do. Frelic with your children. Leave out that extra group of tucks from the little skirt, and have a romp in the fields with the boys and girls. Give up the dessert for dinner some day, and devote yourself to the sunshine, and be a child again. Your children will forget about the pies you make, and the memory of tucked skirts will last but an hour; but the young hearts will never forget that beautiful day when mother left her work and went out in the fields to gather wild flowers with them. Years after, the sight of a daisy will bring back that day; a blue violet will recall mother's eyes, and a bird's song thrilling suddenly from some leafy bough will awaken sweetest memories of that bright spot in childhood. — Zion's Herald.

Our Young Folks

TO A CHILD.

My fairest child, I have no song to give you; No lark would pipe to skies so dull and gray; Yet, ere we part, one lesson I can leave you: For every day: Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever; Do noble things, not dream them all day long; And so make life, death, and that vast forever One grand, sweet song. — C. Kingsley.

SHE COULD BE TRUSTED.

"I can trust my little daughter; I know she tells me everything," said the mother, holding up the bright, gentle face, and looking down at it fondly. "Yes, mamma," was on the little girl's lips, but her eyes dropped suddenly, and her cheeks were crimsoned in a moment. A kiss on the pretty lips, and the mother was turning away. "Mamma," said the little husky voice, "let me whisper in your ear. Mamma, you trust me—I must tell you everything," and her voice was so low that only the mother heard it. As she bent over to catch the hurried words, she felt the little heart fluttering under her fingers, she saw the face flush and pale; she knew, too, by the quiver of the lips the struggle of the moment.

She would have kissed the lips, the face, and hushed the heart; she would have stopped the trying story, but she knew that a fault confessed was a fault half conquered, and so waited to the end.

It was a strange, new thoughtlessness the little girl recounted, of a sad step aside from the narrow way of right. She knew better. She had been more than half unhappy on account of it for several days, especially as she could not gather courage to confess it—only the words of trust brought about the confession. Could she say, "Yes, mamma," knowing that at that very moment she was covering a little corner of the heart where she had hidden a fault she wished no eyes to see?

The mother, sorry for the child's trial, yet glad of her victory for right, was still sad in thinking of the fault. Other children might have done the same thing—other children might have done worse—but her own fair-faced child! she could have wept before her as she stood both in gladness and in sorrow—sorrow for the fault; gladness that she was too true to receive praise unworthily, too strong for the right to allow the hardness of the confession to overcome her.

She stooped and folded her in her arms, saying, "Kiss me, Kathrina; your fault would break my heart, but that I believe this hour you have conquered; you have done well—now I know better than I knew before, that I can trust my little daughter." — M. Thiers.

"NO 68."

Some years ago a gentleman, his wife and only child, a boy then five or six years old, visited a prison. They were shown through the workshops and prison by an officer, who pointed out the different objects of interest as they passed on. The gentleman was enquiring about a man who had recently been sent to prison for life for murder.

"By-the-by, this is the room," said the officer, stopping before one of the cells, the door of which stood open.

The little boy with a child's curiosity stepped up and looked in. His father came up behind, and playfully pushed him in, and closed the door. The little fellow shrieked to be let out. The door was immediately opened, and he ran sobbing into his mother's arms; and she, brushing back the light curls from his forehead, and kissing him said soothingly, "No, no; they shan't shut my little son up in prison."

The boy was terribly frightened. He turned his eyes once more on the dreaded cell, and for the first time noticed on the door in large yellow figures, "No. 68."

The incident made a deep impression on his mind. Time passed on; he grew to manhood; his father and mother both died and left him alone. He became a sailor and a good one, rising step by step till he was second in command of one of the California steamers. But alas! in consequence of the vice of drunkenness which has dragged many down from high positions, he lost his situation, came back to Boston, sank lower and lower, and was finally arrested for breaking into a store, and sentenced to the State Prison for four years. When received at the prison, he was taken to the bath-room, bathed, shaved, hair cut, clothed in the prison dress, and then conducted to the cell he was to occupy. Judge of the horror and consternation of this young man when he finds himself standing before, and the officer opening the same cell, "No. 68," into which he, when a child, had been thrust for a moment by his father. In relating the story, he said no man could imagine his feelings when he found himself an inmate of that cell; every incident and scene from childhood rushed upon his mind. The exclamation of his mother, "No, no; they shan't shut up my little son in prison," rang in his ears. He threw himself upon a stool and wept like a child.

Sunday School

LESSON IX.—AUG.

ABRAHAM'S INTER-

IN: 16-

TIME—B. C. 1897. 17 of last lesson.

PLACE—Hebron, abo of Jerusalem.

INTRODU

In Abram's ninety-ninth year, Jehovah appeared to the covenant with character of "father of nations." In sign thereof he changed Abram's name to Abraham (exalted father) and looking down at it fondly. "Yes, mamma," was on the little girl's lips, but her eyes dropped suddenly, and her cheeks were crimsoned in a moment. A kiss on the pretty lips, and the mother was turning away. "Mamma," said the little husky voice, "let me whisper in your ear. Mamma, you trust me—I must tell you everything," and her voice was so low that only the mother heard it. As she bent over to catch the hurried words, she felt the little heart fluttering under her fingers, she saw the face flush and pale; she knew, too, by the quiver of the lips the struggle of the moment.

EXPLAN

And the men rose up whom Abraham entered the patriarch had entered as their chief soon of the Lord himself, Jethro others are in the event Abram went with them the East required Abraham guests a little on the

And the Lord said, "hovah" (Lord) is used same with "angel of the Lord." The angel for the God-man before he became Jesus, was in all ages world. Should I hide All the principles of the in its relations to the here; his forbearance constant notice, the the strictness and judgment; and here, that these same erate upon the mind God in all ages.

Seeing that Abraham disclosed to Abraham to do Sodom and Gomorah had chosen his the people of God, in structing his descent God, he might lead the righteous, so that partakers of the pro not be overtaken by truction of Sodom cities was to be a pe keep the fate of the before the mind of I

Familial religion is propagating his ch makes the covenant household nature; it has always been exte pious posterity. It promises to Abraham through them to the yet Abraham's cond part of the plan. Esteem family religio should be held by us stand. No harsh ment is here conten the house is to be the children to the ing their own choic please in religious t Not only his child and dependents. I hope, even against blessing on their ch is not in them, but

The cry of Sodom every sin as expres mand which it ma for every sin has against the sinner, atea the fixed, ne connection (Gen lished between tra ment.

I will go down w would look into the would be slow befo lution to inflict ve most; that he wot inquiry to see whet be had incural

And Abraham c omences the mo of human intere the whole compass which the tendr violence of Abrah the astonishing cle of Jehovah on the colors such as the alone could presen troy the righteous. Num 16: 19-22. Do often come up for the sins of a aration cannot av the final adjust great day of accou

There be fifty spares a communi good men in it. is concealed by the suppliant patri number who may truction. He co found so many as destroy and not ham goes on from grants him step be ing before his re out from Abrah tenity of his pri ham, on his sid, sight as to the Sodom, and as to itself.

If I find fifty- How little do the the extent of eve tions to the right not the Lord's plagues; pestilenc quake, fire and s little sanctuary those to whom h may be passed up ket and in the s