

Youth's Department.

This following apologue will amuse our youthful readers; and Churchmen of ripe age may gather from it a great deal of useful instruction:—

THE BLACK-BIRDS AND THE FROGS. A MUSICAL FABLE.

In a meadow which lay near an extensive marsh, dwelt a colony of black birds, who, when evening came, were wont to meet together amongst the thick foliage of an old elm tree which stood at the verge of the morass. They were a happy colony, and after they had finished their daily toil, long and loud were the songs they sent forth from the old tree, gladdening the very air with the harmony of their voices, and rendering the solitude of the meadow joyous with sweet songs. They all sang, each one swelling his little throat, and pouring forth his rich tones as if in ecstasy, and thus for season after season they had lived and sung in perfect harmony and happiness.—One evening, however, a member of this colony, (Primy he was called by his companions, because he prided himself on his persona. appearance, and thought that of all black-birds his plumage was the blackest and most glossy,) chanced to visit a little pool of water at the edge of the swamp, for the purpose of quenching his thirst, and washing and arranging his feathers, when he was addressed by a genteel-looking individual, whom he recognized after a moment's gaze as John Frog, a worthy inhabitant of the marsh, and a very good singer. Johnny Frog was a polite and self-conceited little fellow, and was so proud of his accomplishments, (he was an excellent dancer, as well as a singer,) that he never could cease talking about them.

"Good evening, Mr. Primy," said Johnny, as he advanced with a graceful hop towards the black-bird. "I have long sought an opportunity of seeing you or one of your colony. How is your family?" Primy replied to this salutation with a respectful bow, for he regarded the varied accomplishments of John Frog with the highest veneration, and having assured him that Mrs. Primy was as well as could be expected, and that three little Primys had already pipped their shells, inquired with some earnestness, why Johnny had been so anxious to see him. "Why, you see," said Johnny, "I have three friends, all good singers, as you know, as well as myself, who, being entirely out of employment, are desirous of knowing whether engagements might be made with your colony in which our talents could be called into service. To speak more plainly, we have observed that you black birds have as much as you can do to provide for your families, (thank goodness all my little polywogs can take care of themselves,) and we have thought that we might be useful to you in the capacity of singers. After your day's toil you must indeed be weary and out of breath, and as it seems necessary that you should have music, why not procure the services of such as have nothing else to attend to? My three friends and myself form a quartette, who can produce music far superior to anything you have yet heard. We have practised until we are perfect in our knowledge of each other's voices and style of singing, and are able to execute the most difficult and intricate passages of harmony without a single error. Thus, we can give you the best music without any exertion on your part, and, having nothing else to do, we can study and improve ourselves until we shall be perfect in our art. This, interrupted by your various engagements, you can never be able to attain. What do you think of my plan?"

Primy was struck with the brilliancy of the idea, and felt proud and flattered at the thought that Master Frog had selected him as his confidante in this matter, he did not think for a moment that accident alone had brought about the meeting.

"Master Frog," said he, with great dignity, "I am rejoiced that you have chosen me as your counsellor. I have, I say it without vanity, great influence with my comrades, and I am so favorably impressed with your plan that I shall lose no time in communicating it to my fellows. You may expect a favorable answer to-morrow."

The Frog, placing his hand on his heart, bowed low, and turning, plunged into the pool to inform his friends of his success.

Primy hastened to the tree. The whole colony were singing loudly; but mounting an elevated branch, Primy screamed Silence! at the top of his voice, and at length succeeded in gaining a hearing. He set forth in eloquent words the advantages of John Frog's plan; and finally won the support of the younger members of the community, who were led away by the novelty of the proposal, and clamorously demand-

ed that it should be adopted, and the Messrs. Frog immediately engaged. The older birds shook their heads at first; they loved singing for singing's sake; they saw that if the Frogs were employed it was expected that they should do all the singing, while the birds should remain silent. They consented finally, however, to the arrangement, and Primy was authorized to engage the foreigners.

The next evening Johnny Frog and his three friends were promptly at their appointed place. Primy soon made his appearance, the arrangements were satisfactorily adjusted, and Primy with the quartette returned to the tree. The Frogs were assisted to their places, and immediately commenced operations. This was the burden of their song:

"Chunk, chunk, tah, plum, plum,
Chunk, too, tah, too,
Plunk, plunk, sah, clum, clum,
Chunk, too, tah, too!"

The blackbirds listened in silence. The young ones applauded vigorously at the close of each stanza, but the old ones looked wise and contrived.

"Chunk, chunk, tah, plum, 'um,"

with the musical sound of their own familiar songs.—Every evening the Frogs were at their station, singing their songs for the blackbirds, who, as on the first occasion, listened in silence. But there was something wanting in their usual evening gatherings which even the younger members of the community discovered.—There was not that joyous animation and cheerfulness which had characterized their social hours before the introduction of the foreign quartette. All felt keenly the desire to sing, and it must be confessed that during the day, when absent on their usual avocations, many of the young, as well as of the old, indulged in their old songs, and could not help regretting that they were unable to unite their voices with their comrades old; but they dare not sing in the presence of the frog quartette. They were not familiar with the music, and not wishing to make discord, they held their peace and listened to strains they did not understand. This feeling spread throughout the colony, until at length there was not a cheerful looking blackbird to be found. Even Primy seemed down-hearted, and frequently allowed his feathers to be ruffled. From a happy assemblage their evening meetings had become dreary, silent, and mournful, and rendered even less endurable by the "Plunk, plunk, sah, clum, clum," of the frogs, who, thinking only of the dignity of their own appearance, were entirely regardless of the feelings of others. At length the old birds resolved on a change. They had seen the folly of the matter before, and they hoped that now the young birds had also become weary of the monotony of their present life. They spoke to the young ones on the subject, and were rejoiced to learn that shame only had prevented them from requesting the quartette to be removed. Master Johnny and his friends after this were no longer in the ascendant.—They were requested politely to change their tunes to the old familiar ones of the blackbirds, so that all might join in the singing. They indignantly refused, and the result was that they were dismissed by the blackbirds, and returned to their own pool and polywogs to sing and live as they saw fit, while our friends, the birds, once more united in "congregational singing," and once more were cheerful, happy, and free. They never again engaged a "quartette" to do their singing; but thenceforth, as sensible blackbirds, sang their own songs and enjoyed their own music.—*Musical Times and Gazette.*

Selections.

(From the London Guardian.)

The Life of Esther de Berdt, afterwards Esther Reed, of Pennsylvania. Privately Printed. Philadelphia: Sherman.

(Concluded from last week.)

The following is a letter from Washington to Mr. Reed. We give it entire. All that great man's writings are valuable: this seems to us peculiarly stamped with his noble serenity and cheerful unselfishness:—

"Middlebrook, Jan. 23d, 1777.

"Dear Sir—Your favours of the 12th and 18th inst. are both before me, and on two accounts have given me pain; first, because I much wished to see you at the head of the cavalry; and, secondly, by refusing of it my arrangements have been a good deal disconcerted. As your notions for refusing the appointment are no doubt satisfactory to yourself, and your determination fixed, it is unnecessary to enter upon a discussion of the point. I can only add, I wish it had been otherwise, especially as I flatter myself that my last would convince you, that you still held the same place in my affections that you ever did."

inclination, or a desire of rendering those aids to the service which your abilities enable you to do, should lead you to the camp, it is unnecessary for me, I hope, to add that I should be extremely happy in seeing you one of my family. Let you remain in it.

"The late coalition of parties in Pennsylvania is a most fortunate circumstance; that, and the spirited manner in which the militia of this State turned out, upon the late manoeuvre of the enemy, has, in my opinion, given a greater shock to the enemy than any event which has happened in the course of this dispute, because it was altogether unexpected, and gave the decisive stroke to their design on Philadelphia.—The hint you have given respecting the compliment due to the executive powers of Pennsylvania I thank you for, but can assure you I gave Gen. Mifflin no direction respecting the militia, that I did not conceive, nay, that I had not been told by Congress, he was vested with before; for you must know that General Mifflin, at the particular instance, and by a resolve of Congress, had been detained from his duty in this camp near a month, to be in readiness to have out the militia, if occasion should require it, and only got here the day before I received such intelligence, as convinced me that the enemy were upon the point of moving; in consequence of which I requested him to return, and without defining his duty, desired he would use his utmost endeavors to carry the designed opposition into effect; conceiving that a previous plan had been laid by Congress, or the State of Pennsylvania, so far as respected the mode of drawing the militia out. The action of them afterward circumstances alone could direct. I did not pretend to give any order about it.

"It gives me pleasure to learn from your letter that the reasons assigned by me to General Arnold, for not attacking the enemy in their situation, between the Raritan and Millstone, met with the approbation of those who were acquainted with them. We have some amongst us, and I dare say Generals, who wish to make themselves popular at the expense of others, or who think the cause is not to be advanced otherwise than by fighting—the peculiar circumstances under which it is to be done, and the consequences that may follow, are objects too trivial for their attention—but as I have one great end in view, I shall, in spite of the [illegible] of the kind, still pursue the means which in my judgment lead to the accomplishment of it, not doubting but that the candid part of mankind, if they are convinced of my integrity, will make proper allowance for my inexperience and frailties. I will agree to be loaded with all the obloquy they can bestow, if I commit a wilful error.

"If General Howe has not manoeuvred much deeper than most people seem disposed to think him capable of, his army is absolutely gone off panic struck, but as I cannot persuade myself into a belief of the latter, notwithstanding it is the prevailing opinion of my officers, I cannot say that the move I am about to make towards Ansbury accords altogether with my opinion, not that I am under any other apprehension than that of being obliged to lose ground again, which would indeed be no small misfortune, as the spirits of our troops and country is greatly revived, and I presume, the enemy's not a little depressed, by their late retrograde motions.

"By some late accounts I fancy the British Grenadiers got a pretty severe peppering by Morgan's Rifle Corps; they fought, it seems, a considerable time at the distance of from twenty to forty yards, and from the concurring accounts of several of the officers, more than a hundred of them must have fallen. Had there not been some mistake in point of time for marching the brigades that were ordered upon that service, and particularly in delivering an order to Gen. Varnum, I believe the rear of Gen. Howe's troops might have been a little rougher handled than they were, for if an express who went to Gen. Maxwell the evening before had reached him in time to co-operate upon the enemy's flank, for which purpose he was sent down the day before with a respectable force, very good consequences might have resulted from it; however, it is too late to remedy these mistakes, and my paper tells me I can add no more than to assure you that—I am, dear Sir, your affectionate

"GEO. WASHINGTON."

Mrs. Reed and her father, Mr. De Berdt, the American agent, seem to have had the same opinion of Franklin. "He bids me, tell you," she says to Mr. Reed in a letter of 1776, "his opinion of Dr. Franklin—that he stood entirely neuter till he saw which way the contest would be carried, and then broke out fiercely on the side of America." Her own opinion of him, much later, appears to have been the same.