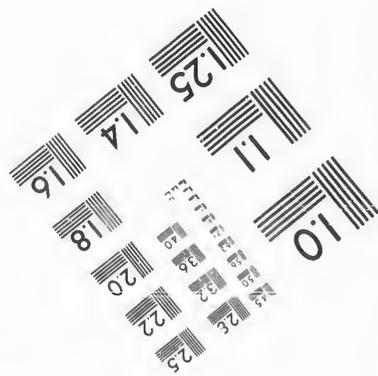
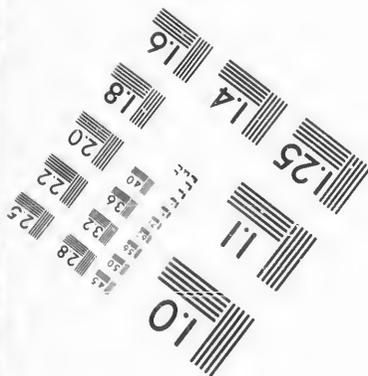
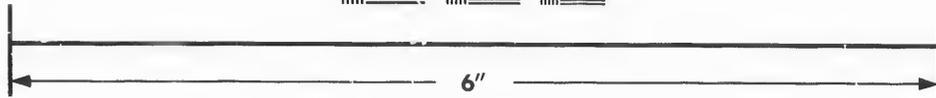
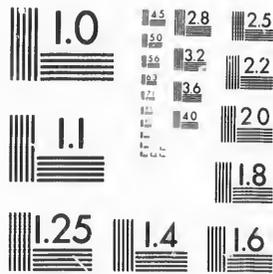


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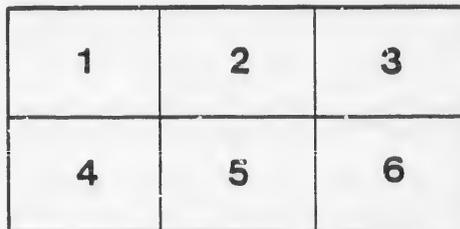
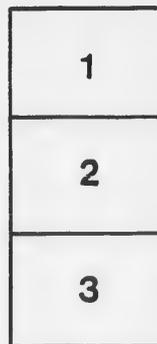
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HALF HOURS

WITH THE

POET WHITTIER

BY

MARTHA SWIFT

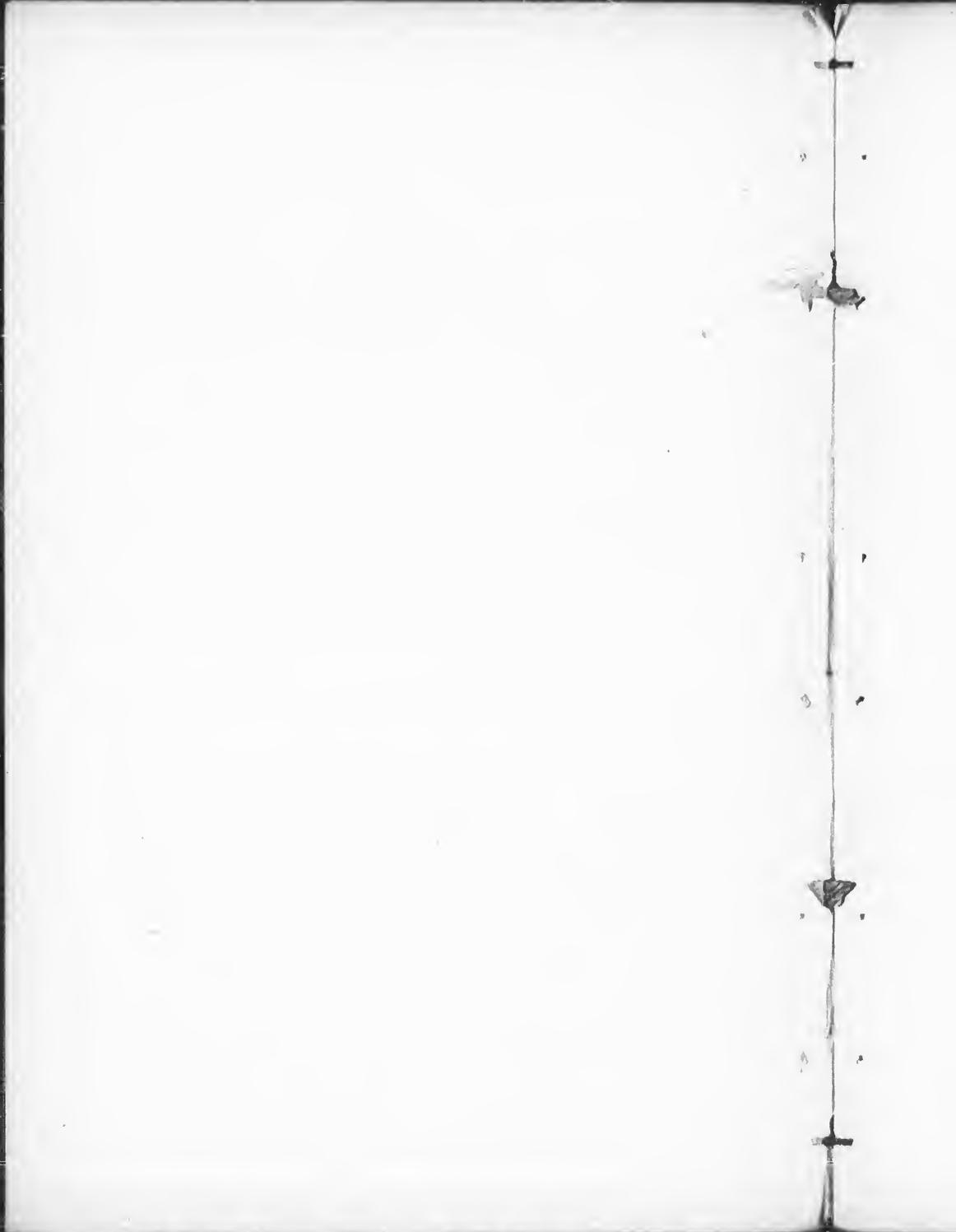
O hearts of love! O souls that turn
Like sunflowers to the pure and best!
To you the truth is manifest;
For they the mind of Christ discern
Who lean like John upon His breast!

—*J. G. Whittier.*

TORONTO

TIMMS & Co., THE OXFORD PRESS

1894



To
MY DEAR CHILDREN AND FRIENDS
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE.

MY first thought of writing this little book sprang from the desire of helping my children and friends to appreciate and enjoy the poems of John Greenleaf Whittier.

Some of the poems are not complete, only those stanzas illustrating the point under discussion being given.

Many times have these poems refreshed and encouraged me, and I send them forth with a hope and prayer that they may find echo in other hearts.

MARTHA SWIFT.

Toronto, January 1st, 1894.

CHAPT

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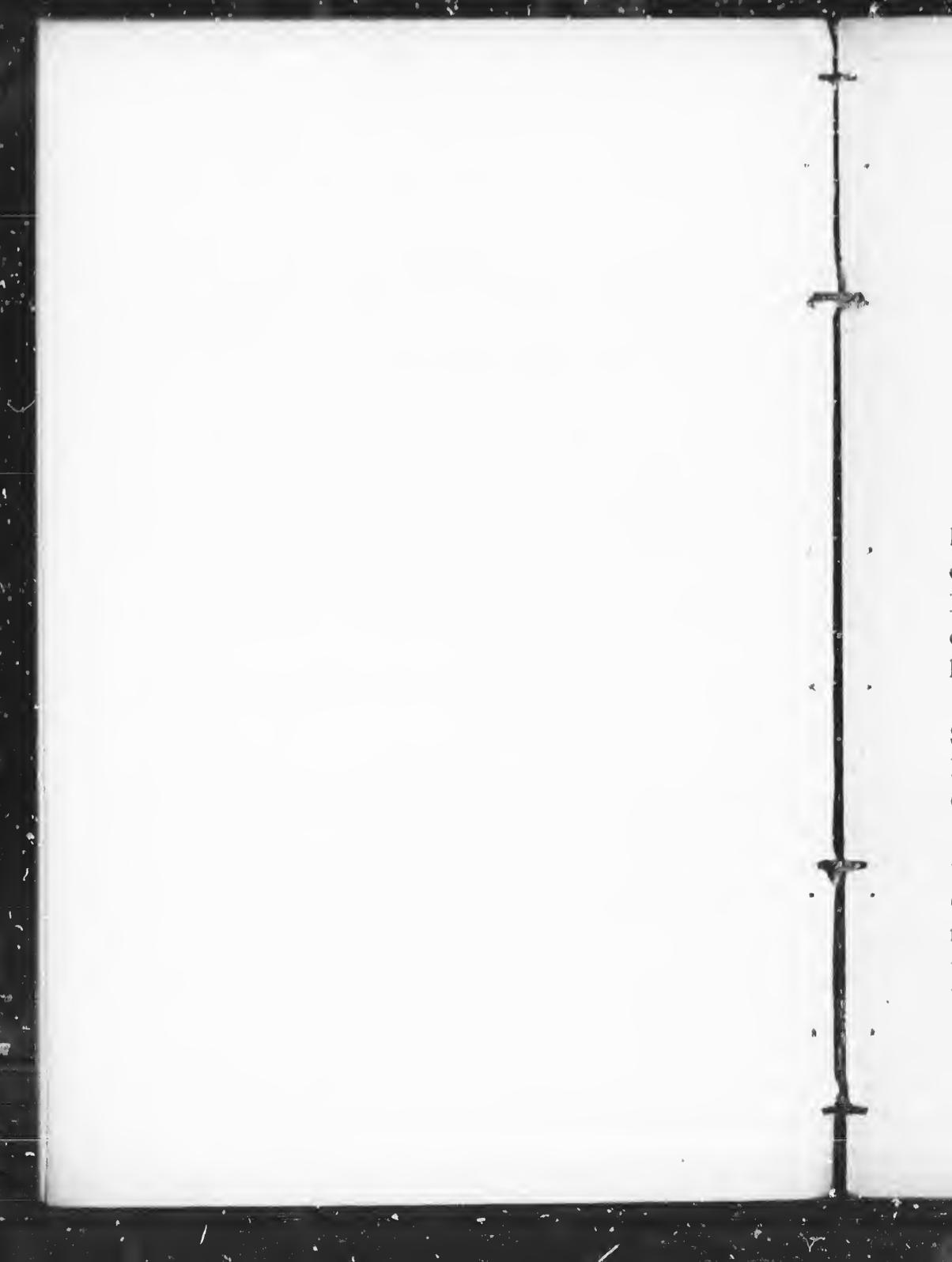
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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SHORT SKETCH OF HIS LIFE	9
II. FOND RECOLLECTIONS	13
III. THE FRIENDS OR QUAKERS	17
IV. A TRUTH SEEKER	21
V. ETERNAL TORMENT	26
VI. HIS VIEWS STATED	41
VII. THE INWARD VOICE	47
VIII. THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN	50
IX. WHITTIER AND TENNYSON— A COMPARISON	54
X. CONCLUSION	56



Half Hours with the Poet Whittier.

CHAPTER I.

SHORT SKETCH OF HIS LIFE.

IN passing through life, how few we meet who are not lovers of poetry—who have not his or her favorite poet. In glancing over the names of our standard poets—Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, Byron, Moore, Longfellow, Tennyson, etc., it is difficult to choose from among them; they all have a loving place in our hearts.

In youth I revelled in the lays of Sir Walter Scott and Thomas Moore; but in later years none have been so sweet to me as the writings of John Greenleaf Whittier.

The motto that was written over my copy-book when a child may be true, "Comparisons are odious," but I do not think it applies in this case, for I think it well to compare the lives and characters of noted men. We gain a knowledge of them by their writings.

If we study the poems of Scott, Byron, Moore, Burns, etc., we find their characters reflected in

their verses. We notice much that is charming and pleasing to sense, but we fail to see the pure, uplifting sentiments that we discover in the writings of Longfellow, Tennyson and Whittier. The latter is so simple, homely and natural; and for purity of thought cannot be surpassed.

John Greenleaf Whittier was born at Haverhill, Massachusetts, December 17, 1807. Until the age of eighteen he worked on a farm, and occasionally as a shoemaker. In 1829 he went to Boston as editor of a newspaper, and in the following year became editor of the *New England Weekly Review*, published at Hartford, Conn., but in 1832 returned to Haverhill to edit the *Haverhill Gazette*. He remained there until 1836, being twice a representative in the Legislature of the State.

John G. Whittier, wide though his fame as a poet is, was little known as a man. Indeed, he never cared to be so known, for he was modest, even to shyness, shunning mixed society, and seldom appearing on public occasions or at public assemblies, unless they were discussing principles to which he was devoted. He had no inclination to travel, never having been abroad, and having made few journeys in his own country. Once a prominent Bostonian, by way of additional inducement to cross the ocean, told him that he had thousands of admirers in Great Britain, who would

be delighted to greet him and extend to him every kind of honor, public and private. At this the poet smiled sadly and said: "My good friend, thee adds terrors to travel that I have not thought of, and I have not the courage to encounter the common difficulties that must beset every man."

He was wholly opposed to lecturing. No amount of money could tempt him, for he had been offered repeatedly as high as \$1,000 a night. "I can never understand," was one of his remarks, "how a modest man can be willing to make an exhibition of himself."

In 1836 he was chosen secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, and his stirring poems, expressing his convictions against the great national wrong, early made him conspicuous in the then small band of Abolitionists.

For the last twenty years or more he had been, to some extent, a recluse, rarely going away from home, and keeping, in unfavorable weather, within his simple, sedulously neat house at Amesbury. He had frequent visitors from all parts of the country, drawn thither by his great reputation as a poet. He made it a rule to see all who came, when he was well, and he was uniformly considerate and courteous.

Our Poet was not regularly or classically educated. He had never been on foreign soil. Perhaps

to this is due the fact that he was altogether American in his themes and their treatment. He never aimed at the admiration of scholars. He tried to reach the common heart, to touch the chord of popular sympathy, and he succeeded. He will outlive many more pretentious and elaborate poets, who, like Dante and Milton, are continually praised, but seldom read. He belonged to the home and heart. He interpreted the innermost feelings of our nature, and spoke to the conscience.

He recognized his poetic gift to be as much a spiritual gift as that of preaching, and every line he wrote was to emancipate and elevate mankind. It is such lives as his that teach us that Christ's religion is true; for, great and good as were his writings, greater, deeper and more lovely was the man himself.

Never, since the days of Fox, Penn and Barkley, has there been one who more completely voiced in his writings, and presented in his example, the ideal Friend. Living for the brotherhood of man, he never forgot the fatherhood of God, and this enabled him to so order his days that in the end peace crowned all.

His end was a very peaceful one. He passed away while on a visit to Hampton Falls, N. H., on September 8, 1892. He was conscious of his surroundings to the last moment, and attended by

his nearest relatives. The funeral took place at Amesbury, Mass.

CHAPTER II.

FOND RECOLLECTIONS.

IT is evident from many of his early poems that Whittier had a romance, but the grave closed over the girl he loved, and when he was an old man he loved to think of her. How touching is the memory of "The Old School House."

Long years ago a winter sun
Shone over it at setting ;
Lit up its western window panes,
And low eave's icy fretting.

It touched the tangled golden curls,
And brown eyes, full of grieving,
Of one who still her steps delayed
When all the school were leaving.

For near her stood the little boy
Her childish favor singled ;
His cap pulled low upon a face
Where pride and shame were mingled,

Pushing with restless feet the snow
To right and left, he lingered ;—
As restlessly her tiny hands
The blue-checked apron fingered.

He saw her lift her eyes ; he felt
 The soft hand's light caressing,
 And heard the tremble of her voice,
 As if a fault confessing.

" I'm sorry that I spelt the word ;
 I hate to go above you,
 Because "—the brown eyes lower fell,—
 " Because, you see, I love you ! "

Still memory to a gray-haired man
 That sweet child-face is showing.
 Dear girl ! the grasses on her grave
 Have forty years been growing !

He lives to learn, in life's hard school,
 How few who pass above him
 Lament their triumph and his loss,
 Like her,—because they love him.

Again, we find him by the sea shore, and
 memory goes back to the loved object of his
 affections. We hear him saying in "A Sea
 Dream":—

Thou art not here, thou art not there,
 Thy place I cannot see ;
 I only know that where thou art
 The blessed angels be
 And heaven is glad for thee.

But turn to me thy dear girl-face
 Without the argel's crown,
 The wedded roses of thy lips,
 Thy loose hair rippling down
 In waves of golden brown.

In these pathetic lines we trace the melody of a love not lost, but gone before.

We quote yet another sorrowful lament in "My Playmate" :—

The blossoms drifted at our feet,
The orchard birds sang clear ;
The sweetest and the saddest day
It seemed of all the year.

For, more to me than birds or flowers,
My playmate left her home,
And took with her the laughing spring,
The music and the bloom.

She kissed the lips of kith and kin,
She laid her hand in mine :
What more could ask the bashful boy
Who fed her father's kine ?

She left us in the bloom of May :
The constant years told o'er
Their seasons with as sweet May morns,
But she came back no more.

I see her face, I hear her voice :
Does she remember mine ?
And what to her is now the boy
Who fed her father's kine ?

It appears our poet was most unfortunate in his loves, for in another of his poems he makes mention of—

A beautiful and happy girl,
With step as light as summer air,

Eyes glad with smiles, and brow of pearl,
 Shadowed by many a careless curl
 Of unconfined and flowing hair ;
 A seeming child in everything,
 Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
 As Nature wears the smile of Spring
 When sinking into Summer's arms.

I hear again thy low replies,
 I feel thy arm within my own,
 And timidly again arise
 The fringed lids of hazel eyes,
 With soft brown tresses overblown.
 Ah ! memories of sweet summer eves,
 Of moonlit wave and willow way,
 Of stars and flowers, and dewy leaves,
 And smiles and tones more dear than they !

It is evident this lady changed her faith, which was the same as his own in youth, for he continues :—

And wider yet in thought and deed
 Diverge our pathways, one in youth ;
 Thine the Genevan's sternest creed,
 While answers to my spirit's need
 The Derby dalesman's simple truth.
 For thee, the priestly rite and prayer,
 And holy day and solemn psalm ;
 For me, the silent reverence where
 My brethren gather, slow and calm.

Can we doubt that these sorrowful memories were the means used for the developing of his

beautiful Christian character? How many, like him, have been crushed by sorrows and trials! but the discipline and chastening has produced in them the peaceable fruits of righteousness (right thinking and acting). We know that the memory of such pure and virtuous love had a sanctifying effect upon his character.

CHAPTER III.

THE FRIENDS OR QUAKERS.

OUR Poet belonged to the society of Friends, or Seekers, as they called themselves, thereby indicating their desire to discover Truth. The name of "Quaker" was given to them by their enemies as a term of derision and reproach.

George Fox, their predecessor and founder, was unquestionably a good man, and sincerely aimed at discovering the primitive truth and practices which had been overlaid in the course of centuries. In a time of deep conflict of soul and trouble of spirit, he found he could not discover by the reading of his Bible anything that satisfied or soothed, or dispelled the anguish of his spirit; and when he consulted with his ministers, who had been educated to preach their interpretation of the Bible, they in turn were unable to give him the

comfort he was seeking, and could only direct him again to the Bible which had failed to bring it to him. When he turned from a dependence on all these, in silent communion within himself, he found a revelation was being made to him especially adapted to his then needs, and he recognized it to be an inspiration coming to him from a source higher than man. It brought to him the comfort he had been seeking, it soothed his troubled spirit, quieted his doubts and fears, and brought the rest his soul had been longing for. And it always will. We have only to come in contact with the All-Presence, only to recognize and acknowledge that link that unites us to the All-Father; we have only to "come to ourselves," like the prodigal son, and arise and go to the Father, with the consciousness of *sonship*, and we shall find, like him, peace and rest in the Father's outstretched arms.

So George Fox believed he had found a new truth, one which was of far greater value to him than any that had been realized in his day, and it was his duty to go abroad and proclaim it.

In 1647 he began his missionary career, and eight years afterward ministers of the new society were spreading their doctrines in various parts of the world.

They endured with calm patience the most grievous suffering and oppression. As many as

thirty-four hundred of these earnest, God fearing people were at one time confined in noisome prisons, and many of them died as martyrs to their faith. Their meetings were broken up, their persons were assailed, and they were treated with every form of indignity and contempt.

The society spread very rapidly in England, and when William Penn founded the colony of Pennsylvania, the cause extended under his influence on this continent, and the different meetings assumed a more settled form. Strange as it may seem in this day of light and peace, even in New England their trials were most severe. A godly woman and three men of culture and earnest piety were hanged on Boston Common for their faith.

We find our Poet referring to these times of persecution and trial in many of his poems.

I remember many years ago in London, Eng., I used to meet many of the Quakers, as we always called them. Their peculiarity of dress was striking, although there was very little difference in the dress worn by the early Wesleyan Methodists. The bonnets were of the coalscuttle shape, made of cardboard, covered with silk of dove color, drab or lavender; the shawl was a square piece, crossed over, without lace or fringe; the dress was made of the same color, perfectly plain, without trimming of any kind. The elder ladies usually wore

a white net or muslin handkerchief across the bosom. They were most gentle and unassuming in their behavior.

About fifteen years ago I remember going from Toronto to Flint, Mich., on a visit to my children. I was looking from one to another of the passengers in the railway carriage, in the hope of selecting an agreeable companion to converse with, otherwise the journey always appeared so long. At last I saw a little old lady knitting. She was dressed as a Quakeress. She had one of the sweetest smiles, and with her mild blue eyes and peach-blossom complexion, she made a most attractive picture. Her dress was composed of the finest texture, and she was the very picture of neatness and elegance.

I was struck at once with the resemblance to the lady in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," whom Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe portrays, and I felt inclined to ask the same question that she does: "Why does not someone sing the praises of beautiful old women?" There are not wanting poets always ready to sing the praises of the young; but are there not beautiful old men and women, the light of love and goodness just beaming from their countenances — men and women that we can take into our hearts and love at first sight?

Such was my Quakeress. I kept glancing over to her longingly, and I think she must have caught

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my thought, for when the passenger at my side changed her seat she came over to me, and we at once entered into conversation. I found her so agreeable and intelligent,—so liberal in her views. She said she was not particular at what meeting house she worshipped, nor what they chose to call themselves. We enjoyed our chat immensely, and parted as regretfully as if we had known each other for years; but I have not forgotten that sweet face. It was like a mirror of the pure thought within.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRUTH SEEKER.

WE follow our Poet as he passes through the troublous times of slavery, raising his voice and pen against every form of oppression and wrong doing; dealing his blows heavy and sharp against tyranny of every form, whether manifested in politics or religion. He was a bold reformer, fearlessly denouncing those evils destructive to the honor and happiness of a nation. We know that his verses assisted to inspire the public sentiment against slavery, and his songs of liberty and freedom we love to sing.

But it is his Christian character I love most to dwell upon. He earnestly sought for truth, not in

creeds and dogmas, for theological teachings he never subscribed to. He sounded the depths and shoals of ancient and modern thought, and in striving to solve his many problems he arrived at conclusions that will help many another searcher in time to come.

I often think of our Quaker Poet, as he sat in his study contemplating the hard and knotty questions which will sooner or later trouble the mind of every thinking Christian. We find in some of his poems the breathing of a mind in a state of unrest. He wrestled with the dark shadows of doubt and distrust, and as we trace the arguments whereby he is delivered, and emerges from that state into one of liberty and freedom, we can share with him his deliverance. Indeed, he always came out of those trying ordeals victorious. In the following soliloquy he reaches a point of terror which few undergo ; but at the same time it shows us that he underwent many severe spiritual exercises :—

MY SOUL AND I.

Stand still, my soul, in the silent dark ;
I would question thee,
Alone in the shadow, drear and stark,
With God and me !

What, my soul, was thy errand here ?
Was it mirth, or ease,
Or heaping up dust from year to year ?
“ Nay, none of these ! ”

And where art thou going, soul of mine ?

Can'st see the end ?

And whither this troubled life of thine

Evermore doth tend ?

What daunts thee now ?—What shakes thee so ?

My sad soul, say.

“ I see a cloud like a curtain low

Hang o'er my way.

“ Whither I go I cannot tell :

That cloud hangs black,

High as the heaven and deep as hell,

Across my track.

“ I see its shadow coldly enwrap

The souls before ;

Sadly they enter it, step by step,

To return no more.

“ I call on the souls who have left the light

To reveal their lot ;

I bend my ear to that wall of night,

And they answer not.

“ But I hear around me sighs of pain,

And the cry of fear,

And a sound like the slow, sad dropping of rain,

Each drop a tear !

“ Ah ! the cloud is dark, and, day by day,

I am moving thither :

I pass beneath it on my way—

God pity me !—WHITHER ? ”

But never for this, never for this,

Was thy being lent ;

For the craven's fear is but selfishness,

Like his merriment.

Folly and fear are sisters twain :

One closing her eyes,
The other peopling the dark inane
With spectral lies.

Know well, my soul, God's hand controls

Whate'er thou fearest ;
Round Him in calmest music rolls
Whate'er thou hearest.

What to thee is shadow, to Him is day,

And the end He knoweth ;
And not on a blind and aimless way
The Spirit goeth.

Man sees no future,—A phantom show

Is alone before him :
Past Time is dead, and the grasses grow,
And flowers bloom o'er him.

Nothing before, nothing behind ;

The steps of Faith
Fall on the seeming void, and find
The rock beneath.

The Present, the Present is all thou hast

For thy possessing ;
Like the patriarch's angel, hold it fast
Till it gives its blessing.

Why fear the night? Why shrink from Death,

That phantom wan?
There is nothing in heaven or earth beneath,
Save God and man.

Peopling the shadows, we turn from Him

And from one another ;
All is spectral and vague and dim,
Save God and our brother !

O, restless Spirit ! Wherefore strain
Beyond thy sphere ?
Heaven and hell, with their joy and pain,
Are now and here.

All which is real now remaineth,
And fadeth never ;
The hand which upholds it now sustaineth
The soul forever.

We cannot help wishing that the society of Friends had remained in one body, instead of separating, as they did in 1828. Elias Hicks had introduced many reforms and propounded several doctrines at variance with the orthodox beliefs ; so, after much discussion and dissension, they concluded to separate. Mr. Hicks died in 1830, two years after the separation.

Whittier was then a young man. He did not secede, but remained with his orthodox brethren, although his sympathies and views were in line with progressive Friends.

It was the progressive party who represented the Friends at the World's Fair Religious Congress. They read a number of interesting and instructive papers, setting forth their faith, hopes and works.

The fact of our Poet remaining with his orthodox brethren accounts for the apparent dissensions he had from time to time with them, on views and opinions not held by both parties. If he had

belonged to many of our orthodox churches, or even to some of the many little meeting houses, he would have had to contend against imputations of heresy and heterodoxy. How could such a man accept the dogmas of traditional denominational history? Take, for example, the dogma of eternal torment. How could he subscribe to such a creed? Liberal and thoughtful men have called it a horrible libel on the character of God. It has shocked the hearts and consciences of the best men and women, and driven multitudes of thoughtful persons into infidelity.

CHAPTER V.

ETERNAL TORMENT.

LET us try and glean from some of his poems our Poet's real sentiments on this subject. We will select "Tauler the Preacher."

Then, as he mused, he heard along his path
A sound as of an old man's staff among
The dry, dead linden-leaves; and, looking up,
He saw a stranger, weak, and poor, and old.

"Peace be unto thee, father," Tauler said,
"God give thee a good day!" The old man raised
Slowly his calm blue eyes. "I thank thee, son;
But *all* my days are good, and none are ill"

Wondering thereat, the preacher spake again.
 God give thee happy life ! " The old man smiled,
 " I never am unhappy."

Tauler laid his hand upon the stranger's coarse
 gray sleeve :

" Tell me, O father, what thy strange words mean.
 Surely man's days are evil, and his life
 Sad as the grave it leads to." " Nay, my son,
 Our times are in God's hands, and all our days
 Are as our needs ; for shadow as for sun,
 For cold as heat, for want as wealth, alike
 Our thanks are due, since that is best which is ;
 And that which is not, sharing not his life,
 Is evil only as devoid of good.
 And for the happiness of which I spake,
 I find it in submission to His will,
 And calm trust in the holy Trinity
 Of Knowledge, Goodness, and Almighty Power."

Silently wondering, for a little space,
 Stood the great preacher ; then he spake as one
 Who, suddenly grappling with a haunting thought
 Which long has followed, whispering through the
 dark

Strange terrors, drags it, shrieking, into light :
 " What if God's will consign thee hence to hell ? "

" Then," said the stranger, cheerily, " be it so.
 What hell may be I know not ; this I know,—
 I cannot lose the presence of the Lord :
 One arm, Humility, takes hold upon
 His dear Humanity ; the other, Love,
 Clasps His Divinity. So, where I go,
 He goes ; and better fire-walled hell with Him,
 Than golden-gated paradise without."

We get the same sentiment in "The Minister's Daughter."

In the minister's morning sermon
He had told of the primal fall,
And how henceforth the wrath of God
Rested on each and all.

And how, of His will and pleasure,
All souls, save a chosen few,
Were doomed to the quenchless burning,
And held in the way thereto.

And after the painful service
On that pleasant Sabbath day,
He walked with his little daughter
Through the apple bloom of May.

Around on the wonderful glory
The minister looked and smiled :
" How good is the Lord who gives us
These gifts from His hand, my child.

" Behold in the bloom of apples
And the violets in the sward
A hint of the old lost beauty
Of the garden of the Lord ! "

Then up spake the little maiden,
Treading on snow and pink :
" O father ! these pretty blossoms
Are very wicked, I think.

" Had there been no Garden of Eden,
There never had been a fall ;
And if never a tree had blossomed,
God would have loved us all."

"Hush, child!" the father answered,
"By His decree man fell;
His ways are in clouds and darkness,
But He doeth all things well.

"And whether by His ordaining
To us cometh good or ill,
Joy or pain, or light or shadow,
We must fear and love Him still."

"Oh! I fear Him, said the daughter,
"And I try to love Him, too;
But I wish He was good and gentle,
Kind and loving, as you."

The minister groaned in spirit
As the tremulous lips of pain
And wide, wet eyes uplifted
Questioned his own in vain.

Bowing his head, he pondered
The words of the little one:
Had he erred in his life-long teaching?
Had he wrong to the Master done?

To what grim and dreadful idol
Had he lent the holiest name?
Did his own heart, loving and human,
The God of his worship shame?

And lo! from the bloom and greenness,
From the tender skies above,
And the face of his little daughter,
He read a lesson of love.

This reminds me of an article written by the
editor of *Toronto Saturday Night*, several years

ago. He is speaking of the "Westminster Confession of Faith," and quotes Article No. 7 :—

" 'The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His will, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath, for their sins, and to the praise of His glorious justice.'

" Note, brethren and friends, the last line of No. 7, 'To the praise of his glorious justice!' If I had been born in order to be sent to hell, by the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, and to the praise of His glorious justice, for something I could not do, or could not help doing, I feel justified in saying, I would pound upon the sooty walls of my infernal prison and make the blackened and gloomy caverns of hell re-echo with my shrieks of unjust! unjust!"

It is such doctrines as this which produce infidelity; it is such creeds as this which drive men from Christianity into the darkness and doubt of unbelief. I believe the Westminster Confession of Faith has driven more men into agnosticism than all the books of Voltaire or Paine, or all the lectures of Ingersoll. I hold that these articles are nothing but blasphemy — that the conception of a god who could do such things is more horrible than the creeds which lead mothers to throw their babes into the arms of a blazing Moloch, or prompts the bloody sacrifice beneath the wheels of

Juggernaut. When a mother gives up her child to the fire of sacrifice, she believes she insures its salvation and assists in her own ; but when a man subscribes to a creed which says that his fellow-men were born to be damned and to suffer, time without end, he has intensified a million-fold the pagan idea that God glories in blood, revels in death.

Now, where did this doctrine originate? It is tedious to wade through the history of the Christian Fathers, in order to trace the rise and progress of the doctrine of eternal torment. We find from Church history that Athenagoras, who lived from about 127 to 190 A. D., was the earliest known advocate of the theory of eternal life in hell. A master of the Latin tongue, a powerful reasoner, of a vehement nature and a vivid imagination, he was well suited to impress an idea on an age disposed to accept it, and he left the lasting impression of his mind upon the Church of succeeding times. Accordingly, the theory of eternal torment culminated, in the second century, in this fierce and fiery African theologian. But, long before this, Plato, the heathen philosopher, taught a Tartarus, with its fiery streams, whence none could come forth.

In the second, third and succeeding centuries Christian teachers taught the theory of Plato,

Athenagoras, Tertullian and Athanasius ; and Augustine taught beyond a question the eternal misery of the wicked. And this question was not confined to Plato and his times ; every school of philosophy took it up. The subject had not died out before the days of Christ, and, during the times of the Apostles, schools of Grecian thought were to be found in every city of the Roman world.

The theory of eternal agony as the punishment for the sins of this life, had long been held as the view taught by Scripture ; and what was one of the immediate results of this teaching? A refuge from it in Purgatory. Rome tells you that it is, and has been, very commonly held. So it has. It is and has been the belief of nine-tenths of professing Christendom.

Take a large class of men, the profane, the irreligious and the sceptical ; you tell them that everlasting misery is the doctrine taught in the Bible. They willingly accept at your hands the comment on Bible teaching—it is just what they want. They do not love the scriptures ; they do not love God ; they want to live without any sense of responsibility or control. They willingly accept your account of this God : he is one who dooms to eternal misery millions who never heard of Him, and who would never have had this miserable

life if He had not given it unasked. He dooms others, who did not hear of Him, and disobeyed Him. What is the consequence? They reject your God and your Bible together. They reject your God as a monster, and your Bible as a foul lie. Their whole nature, their reason, their conscience, their heart, tells them that punishment such as you speak of is unjust. Of what avail is your theory of punishment on these sceptics? They are not afraid of your hell, because your hell has given them their best reason for not believing in your God.

A missionary proceeds to India, to preach there the gospel of Christ. He meets with a Brahmin. He addresses him as Paul addresses the Epicurians and Stoics: "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

Brahmin.—"What is your message to us?"

Missionary.—"Life from the dead, to all who believe and obey Jesus Christ, the son of God."

Bra.—"That sounds well. What is this life you offer in Christ? What is this death from which you promise deliverance?"

Mis.—"The life I offer in my Master's name is spiritual life; a new heart, loving God and all that is good, and consequent happiness forever. The death from which Christ will deliver you is spiritual death, *i. e.*, moral pollution, its consequent misery,

and the eternal anguish and suffering which God will inflict on all who believe not the Gospel of His son Jesus Christ."

Bra.—"When and where will your God inflict this death on unbelievers?"

Mis.—"It has already been begun through the sinner's own sin, but God has prepared a place where he will complete what is here only begun, where all unbelievers shall suffer throughout an eternal existence for their sin and unbelief."

Bra.—"You say 'for their unbelief.' Then this hell of yours can be only for those who reject the Gospel of Christ?"

Mis.—"No; hell is for all your forefathers, or at least for all of them who sinned against such light and knowledge as they were possessed of."

Bra.—"That would include, I fear, the vast majority of my forefathers. If this is true, it is a terrible message that you bring us. You say that all the past generations of India will suffer pain as a punishment for sin from your God through all eternity. Tell me plainly, for what must they suffer a punishment infinitely beyond all the punishment that has ever been inflicted by the cruelest tyrant of earth?"

Mis.—"They will certainly thus suffer for eternity, but their suffering will be much lighter than that inflicted upon those who refuse God's

offer of grace. We have sprung from one father, the first man, Adam. God made with him a covenant, which included his posterity. Adam violated this covenant, and thereby involved his posterity in the death he brought upon himself."

Bra.—"You say, then, that because Adam sinned, his children, who had nothing to say personally to his sin, will suffer pain for all eternity, and this by your God's arrangement?"

Mis.—"Yes."

Bra.—"I was not taught from infancy to believe in your God, and what you now tell me of Him makes me resolve never to believe in Him. I reject Him as a monster of injustice. What! to inflict endless agony on millions of men who never heard of Him or His laws. With us the worst of crimes is thought sufficiently punished with death. You tell me of His love, but His love I cannot see, while this black stain rests upon His character. You tell me He has doomed all the past millions of India to eternal agony, either for Adam's wilful sin, or for their own sins of ignorance, or for both together. Then, I will have nothing to do with such a God; I prefer mine to yours."

Conversations like this do not rank among imaginary dialogues of the dead; they are dialogues of living men.

In Siam, a priest came to an American missionary and asked him how long his God tormented bad men in a future state ; when answered "forever," he replied : " Our God torments the worst of men only one thousand years, so we will not have your American God in Siam."

This subject may not be a pleasant one to most of us. In fact, it is a subject not often investigated or looked into carefully, and yet it is most important. Our Poet evidently looked into it and carefully examined it before he came to any satisfactory conclusion.

Before leaving this subject, I will here insert a few brief extracts, taken from reliable authorities. Here is one taken from a little book entitled "The Child's Pathway to Glory," published in Birmingham, Eng., and which has passed at least seven editions :—

"There is nothing but misery in hell ; you would never have one moment's ease, for there is nothing but pain and torment there. Put together all you can think of that is miserable and painful and terrible, and it is a nothing to what is prepared for those who go there, and that not for an hour, or a day or a year, but for all eternity. The lost souls who live in that horrible pit wish to die, but they are not able, for God says : 'Their worm dieth not.' The frightful and cruel devil may tor-

ment them as much as ne pleases ; they are made strong to bear it."

Here is a description given by the famous Jonathan Edwards :—

"The misery of sinners in hell will not be a cause of grief to saints in heaven, but of rejoicing ; though they hear you groan, and sigh, and gnash your teeth, these things will not move them at all to pity you. After your godly parents have seen you lie millions of years or ages in torment, day and night, they will not begin to pity you then. They will praise God that His justice appears in the eternity of your misery. The torments of hell will be immeasurably greater than being in a glowing oven, a brick kiln or fiery furnace."

Here is the way in which the Romish Church describes hell. It is taken from a book written by the Rev. J. Furness, and published by the authorities of the Church :—

"The fifth dungeon is the red-hot oven. The little child is in the red-hot oven. Hear how it screams to come out ; see how it turns and twists in the fire ; it beats its head against the roof of the oven ; it stamps its feet on the floor. God was very good to this little child. Very likely God saw that this child would get worse and worse, and would never repent, and so would have to be punished more severely in hell, so God, in His

mercy, called it out of the world in early childhood."

Just one more extract, from a sermon by the celebrated C. H. Spurgeon:--

"Only conceive that poor wretch in the flames, who is saying: 'Oh! for one drop of water to cool my parched tongue.' See how his tongue hangs between his blistered lips — how it excoriates and burns the roof of his mouth, as if it were a fire-brand. I will not picture the scene. Suffice for me to close by saying that the hell of hells will be to thee, sinner, the thought that it will be forever. Thou wilt look up there on the throne of God, and it will be forever; when the damned jingle their burning irons in their torment, they shall say forever! When they howl, echo shall cry forever!

"Forever is written on their racks,
Forever on their chains;
Forever burning in the fire,
Forever ever reigns!"

There is a feeling natural to man—men tenderly cherished and nurtured by the Gospel of Christ—which might have interposed and forbid these conclusions. It is the feeling of pity and mercy which is implanted in us by our Maker. In our comparatively humane age, this feeling is ever rebelling against the dogma of endless misery, supposed to be the teaching of God's Word, taught to us at

our mother's knee, and preached to us by men whom we look upon as ministering to us in God's stead ; loudly proclaimed as the Church's faith always, in every place, and by all the faithful accepted—save by a few heretics—but, in spite of all, mercy is ever raising her powerful protest in our midst. From the depths of the hearts of Watts, Butler, Taylor, and Barnes, came ever welling up the irrepressible feeling of anguish, dismay, and almost madness, at the thought of that which they feel themselves compelled to believe. Grand old Luther looked at Augustine's and Dante's hell, and groaned out : "It is the highest act of faith to believe that God is merciful."

We find that Whittier had the same questions to answer to those of his orthodox brethren with whom he met. He knew the Scripture did not teach any such doctrine ; he knew that they interpreted literally the figurative language of the Bible. Jesus the Christ speaks in the Gospel of many stripes and few stripes, according to the offences. And is hell, according to Augustine's theory, a place of few stripes to those placed therein ? A life of endless misery ! Is this the Christian's explanation of the few or many stripes of Christ, the Master ?

But this system of Augustine's is at direct issue with the teaching of the Bible. God has promised

the restitution of all things. He has pledged His word and His power that evil shall be abolished and destroyed. A time shall come when all things shall be once more very good, when iniquity shall have an end, and when everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord.

Whittier was well acquainted with the facts relative to this doctrine ; so when his friends tried to baffle him with their questions, he replied in the following words :—

The same old baffling questions ! O my friend,
 I cannot answer them. In vain I send
 My soul into the dark, where never burn
 The lamps of science, nor the natural light
 Of Reason's sun and stars. I cannot learn
 Their great and solemn meanings, nor discern
 The awful secrets of the eyes which turn
 Evermore on us, through the day and night,
 With silent challenge and a dumb demand,
 Proffering the riddles of the dread unknown,
 Like the calm Sphinxes, with their eyes of stone,
 Questioning the centuries, from their veils of sand !
 I have no answer for myself or thee,
 Save that I learned beside my mother's knee :
 "All is of God that is, and is to be ;
 And God is good." Let this suffice us still,
 Resting in child-like trust upon His will,
 Who moves to His great ends unthwarted by the ill.

There is a wonderful truth contained in the sentence, "All is of God that is, and is to be." It

seems to me that if this sentence had been the motto in the ages past, and every problem solved by this truth, there never could have been such a theory formulated as the one that we have been glancing at. Jesus the Christ gave us a very different idea of God the Father from that which we have drawn from most of the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus came to reveal the Father, and the revelation was one of love. All through the New Testament we get the assurance that we are now the children of God, and *that* knowledge ought to inspire love, and perfect love casteth out fear.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS VIEWS STATED.

WITH Whittier, religion was a matter of feeling, rather than of dogma, and he seemed always reluctant to frame anything like a formula of belief. His sympathies were with those that taught that the universe is governed by love. His conception of religious duty was, service to man; but it will be noted that he is careful to disown all sympathy with the idea that somehow, and at some period, all will be ended, and salvation secured to all by an arbitrary act of Divinity. In his plan of universal salvation, if such a plan was embraced in his creed, salvation, or freedom from sin, could

only come by the voluntary effort or sacrifice of the individual.

The *Christian Leader* makes a contribution of more than common interest to the current writings about Whittier, in the republication of a letter addressed to one of its editors some years ago. In response to an invitation to attend one of the anniversary meetings of the Universalist Church, Mr. Whittier explained that the coincident meeting of the Friends at Amesbury would prevent him from accepting the invitation, but he accompanied his reply with this valuable statement of his religious views:—

“I recognize the importance of the revolt of your religious society from the awful dogma of predestined happiness for the few and damnation for the many, though in the outset that revolt brought with it some of the old fatalistic beliefs in the arbitrary will and power of the Almighty.

“Assuming that a favored few can be saved by a Divine decree, irrespective of any merit on their part, it was logical at least to suppose that all might be saved in the same way.

“If I mistake not, this view has been greatly modified by the consideration that the natural circumstance of death cannot make any real change of character; that no one can be compelled to be good or evil; that freedom of choice belongs to both worlds, and that sin is by its very

nature inseparable from suffering. I am not accustomed to attach much importance to speculative opinions, and am not disposed to quarrel with any creed, which avoids the danger, on one hand, of attributing implacable vengeance and cruelty to the Heavenly Father, and, on the other hand, of under-rating the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and its baleful consequences. Slowly, but surely, the dreadful burden of the old belief in the predetermined eternity of evil is being lifted from the heart of humanity, and the goodness of God, which leadeth to repentance, is taking the place of the infinite scorn, which made love well nigh impossible. The emphasis of your denial that the Divine economy is alike conservative of good and evil, misery and happiness, gives your organization a claim on the good feeling of other sects which, while fully realizing the solemn truth of the connection, here and hereafter, of sin and suffering, are looking upon the problem of human destiny with the hope inspired by a clearer view of the revelation, made by letter and spirit, of Him 'Whose mercy endureth forever.'

"I am, truly thine,

"JOHN G. WHITTIER."

This letter has given us a clearer view of his religious belief than any he has given in his verses. We can plainly see that he was intimately ac-

quainted with the theories of the early Christian Fathers, but he subscribed to none of them. The eternal goodness of God was the rock on which he built his faith. How refreshing to turn from the hard, unrelenting faith of those, to the child-like trust and confidence that we find him expressing in the following poem :—

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS.

O Friends! with whom my feet have trod
The quiet aisles of prayer,
Glad witness to your zeal for God
And love of man I bear.

I trace your lines of argument ;
Your logic, linked and strong,
I weigh as one who dreads dissent,
And fears a doubt as wrong.

But still my human hands are weak
To hold your iron creeds ;
Against the words ye bid me speak
My heart within me pleads.

Who fathoms the Eternal Thought ?
Who talks of scheme and plan ?
The Lord is God ! He needeth not
The poor device of man.

I walk with bare, hushed feet the ground
Ye tread with boldness shod ;
I dare not fix with mete and bound
The love and power of God.

Ye praise His justice ; even such
His pitying love I deem :

Ye seek a king ; I fain would touch
The robe that hath no seam.

Ye see the curse which overbroods
A world of pain and loss ;
I hear our Lord's beatitudes
And prayer upon the cross.

More than your schoolmen teach, within
Myself, alas ! I know.
Too dark ye cannot paint the sin,
Too small the merit show.

I bow my forehead to the dust,
I veil mine eyes for shame,
And urge, in trembling self-distrust,
A prayer without a claim.

I see the wrong that round me lies,
I feel the guilt within ;
I hear with groan and travail-cries
The world confess its sin.

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed trust my spirit clings :
I know that God is good !

Not mine to look where cherubim
And seraphs may not see,—
But nothing can be good in Him
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below
I dare not throne above ;
I know not of His hate,—I know
His goodness and His love.

I dimly guess from blessings known
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments, too, are right.

I long for household voices gone,
For vanished smiles I long,
But God hath led my dear ones on,
And He can do no wrong.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And, if my heart and flesh are weak
To bear an untried pain,
The bruised reed He will not break,
But strengthen and sustain.

No offering of my own I have,
Nor works my faith to prove ;
I can but give the gifts he gave,
And plead His love for love.

And so, beside the silent sea,
I wait the muffled oar.
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air ;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

O Brothers ! If my faith is vain,
If hopes like these betray,
Pray for me, that my feet may gain
The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord ! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me, if too close I lean
My human heart on Thee !

Shall we ever miss our way if we follow in our Poet's path, and trust ourselves to the "Eternal Goodness," as he did. Will it avail us if we cling ever so tenaciously to any of the creeds of Christendom, or study the different doctrines taught in the various churches, if we fail to grasp that wonderful truth which thus sustained the Christians in all ages of the world ?

CHAPTER VII.

THE INWARD VOICE.

FROM what I can glean from the writings of the Friends, I do not think they lay much stress upon the written Word, or Bible, as a rule of life. Whittier evidently depended strongly upon the leadings of the Spirit, inner light, or inward voice, as he sometimes expressed it in his poems. In the following verses, called "Revelation," he says :—

I pray for faith, I long to trust ;
I listen with my heart, and hear
A voice without a sound : " Be just,
Be true, be merciful, revere
The Word within thee : God is near !

" Believe and trust! Through stars and suns,
Through life and death, through soul and
sense,

His wise, paternal purpose runs.
The darkness of His providence
Is star-lit with benign intents."

O joy supreme! I know the Voice,
Like none beside on earth or sea;
Yea, more, O soul of mine, rejoice,
By all that He requires of me,
I know what God Himself must be.

No picture to my aid I call,
I shape no image in my prayer;
I only know in Him is all
Of life, light, love, everywhere,
Eternal Goodness, here and there.

I know He is, and what He is,
Whose one great purpose is the good
Of all. I rest my soul on His
Immortal love and Fatherhood,
And trust Him as His children should.

In John vii., 37-38 (revised version), we get these words: "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of His belly shall flow rivers of living water." And in the first Epistle of John, chapter ii. and 20th verse, we get the same teaching: "And ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things;" and also in the 27th verse of the same

chapter, "And as for you, the anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you."

Christ Himself, the brightness of the Father's glory, "in us the hope of glory," that special revelation of the light of Christ within us, I understand to be the innermost central revelation of the light of Christ in the heart—the power that worketh in us, which flesh and blood can neither reveal or inherit. It is the "secret place" of His presence. Only when we leave this, our true rest, to seek for help from that which is less than the Divine Light, Life, Truth and Love, can we be deprived of it. Let us count all things but loss if they quench or hide from us one ray of the light of Christ, that light which not only shines from the history of His life and death, or from the lives of His true disciples, but which in its own mysterious glory irradiates every contrite heart, dispelling the darkness which is the power of sin, melting the coldness which is the barrier to life, and changing us from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

All the blessings promised in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy are to those who listen diligently to "the voice of the Lord, thy God," who seek the inner voice in their own souls, and learn to listen and obey what it says to them individually, regardless of what it says to any other person. This

voice will not lead you exactly as it leads any other; but in the infinite variety there will be perfect harmony, for there is but "one God and Father of us all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." There is a deep, still centre within every individual, which is the "most high" of our being. Within this region of our soul is the union of love and wisdom. Having found and realized this, we must know that we are taught and governed by this Divine light.

There is a nameless peace which comes to those who find this secret resting place of communion, away from all anxiety of worldly life. Being careful for nothing, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, and this will carry us over the world's ways, and not down through them.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.

THERE has been a great deal of talk lately about the brotherhood of man. I think the following remarks, by S. J. Hanna, of Boston, on the World's Fair Congress of Religions, give a very clear conception of what the highest sense of this brotherhood should be. :—

"The calling of a Religious Parliament was a unique thought, from every point of view. That

all the religious sects and denominations in the world should assemble on a common footing, and from the same platform announce their peculiar views, doctrines and tenets, was a conception possible, as we believe, only to this age.

"We doubt if there ever was a period of the world's history when such an achievement could have been accomplished. Its purpose was to unite all religion against irreligion, to make the golden rule the basis of this union.

"Surely, no higher aim could actuate the purpose of men, than to establish the golden rule as a living fact in human affairs.

"The immortal saying of the Great Master, 'Therefore, whatsoever things ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them: for this is the law and the prophets,' constitutes the basis of the golden rule. This saying of the Master's was one of those wonderful sayings which are infinite in their meaning. It is of universal import. No matter how much men may differ touching the birth, life and death of Him who said it, they cannot dispute the mighty truth of what He said. They cannot deny but that, if the saying were the rule of conduct to-day, the Millenium would be here, the kingdom of heaven would have come, and the Lord's Prayer would have been actuality, rather than formality and theory.

· “‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven,’ would long since have ceased to be a prayer, and that for which we daily pray would have been accomplished.

“We cannot, with the finite senses, comprehend what would have been the condition of the world to-day had men done unto others as they would wish others to have done unto them.

“It is of national as well as individual application. Had it been observed, wars and rumors of wars would have been unknown; nation would not lift up sword against nation, neither would they learn war any more. With the cessation of war, all its dire consequences would have ceased, human selfishness, the source of all human woes, would have been put away, the incentive to war would no longer have existed. There would have been no cause for panics, riots, insurrections and uprisings. Inducements to crime would not exist under such conditions, equal and exact justice to all men would have been the measure, and government would have obtained on a Divine instead of a human basis. The reign of universal harmony (which is heaven) would have been inaugurated, and all men would have been free indeed, for they would have attained to the freedom of spiritual liberty.

“Now, the only ideal brotherhood must be based on that state in which the individual loves

and serves God supremely, and loves all mankind with a perfect love. This is the only state that can bring peace. To reach this state, each has to do an individual work. We should know the principal cause, or means, by which we are brothers, then we will understand how to establish and obtain the true brotherhood of man."

Now, we find from Whittier's writings that he constantly labored to bring about that brotherhood. His life, labor and efforts were directed against slavery and war, and we can enter into the spirit of the following :—

O brother man, fold to thy heart thy brother ;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there.
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

Follow with reverend steps the great example
Of Him whose holy work was doing good,
So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
Each loving life a psalm of gratitude.

Then shall all shackles fall. The stormy clangor
Of wild war music o'er the earth shall cease ;
Love shall tread out the baleful fire of anger.
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace.

CHAPTER IX.

WHITTIER AND TENNYSON — A COMPARISON.

THE following article, clipped from the *Young Friends' Review*, may not be inappropriate here:—

“Whittier and Tennyson were both ripe in years; Whittier eighty-five and Tennyson eighty-two. Both lived to see their names established in the world and their fame secured. Time will only serve to brighten their glory. Both names are familiar as household words wherever the English language is read. Not a few of their poems have found their way into many a foreign tongue.

“A comparison between the two might better have waited till time, the truest critic, had performed the greater part of the judging, but were it not for the nearness together of the times of their deaths, no other cause would perhaps have associated them together. We therefore may be pardoned for embracing this opportunity of making a short and, of necessity, an inadequate comparison of the two great men and poets.

“If the two poets were measured by the square and plummet; if poetry dealt solely with the beautiful, and its object was solely to please,

Whittier would have to yield the palm to Tennyson, for Tennyson's poems show faultless workmanship and rich poetic embellishments, but the foundation in places lies in the sand. Whittier dug down to the solid rock. His building rests everywhere upon the eternal truth. He was helped in this by the genius of his religion. He was reared in a religion that recognized the workings of God in the soul of man and in the heart of nations. He listened for and obeyed the voice of God within, while Tennyson was enticed to wander at times to delight courtiers and catch the flattery of the great. Whittier's poems are not gems of art, they are gems of nature. His poetry, if judged by poetic rules, is often faulty. He used poetry, not for the love of poetry, but as a means to an end. Poetry, to Whittier, was a secondary consideration. His soul was stirred with an intense, almost burning, desire to right the wrongs of his fellow-men. He saw millions of his brothers dragging out the base lives of slaves. He resorted to poetry to convince the nation that freedom was the God-given birthright of every being. He sang of peace and arbitration, not for the song's sake, but for the sake of peace, because he was not only a professed but a true follower of the Prince of Peace. Tennyson's 'Duke of Wellington' and 'Charge of the Light Brigade' are gems of poetic beauty, but that is all. Their effect is to retard,

rather than accelerate, the happy day when 'swords shall be beaten into plough-shares, and spears into pruning hooks.'

"Because Whittier was in advance of his times in all moral reforms, we do not wish to infer that Tennyson, in this matter, was behind his generation. If we can praise and revere Whittier for the Christlikeness in his living, no one can seriously blame Tennyson for the worldlikeness in his.

"In conclusion, if we were driven to bay by the question, 'Which of the two were the greater?' we would say that Tennyson was the greater poet and artist; Whittier the greater writer and man."

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

WE have followed the Poet through his early life, we have seen his hopes and anticipations blighted by the angel of death, we have followed him during his career as an editor and poet, also in later years as an experienced Christian. We have eagerly listened to him while he has solved his problems for our benefit; now we will close with his own wish, which we will make our own:—

THE WISH OF TO-DAY.

I ask not now for gold to gild
With mocking shine a weary frame.
The yearning of the mind is stilled,
I ask not now for fame.

But, bowed in lowliness of mind,
I make my humble wishes known ;
I only ask a will resigned,
'O Father, to Thine own.

And now my spirit sighs for home,
And longs for light whereby to see
And, like a weary child, would come,
O Father, unto Thee.

Though oft, like letters traced in sand,
My weak resolves have passed away,
In mercy lend Thy helping hand
Unto my prayers to-day.



