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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

Bethel.

"Christ is the ladder, and believers get up, step by step, until they get into glory."—ROMAINE.

In Jacob's vision at Bethel, (Gen. xxviii. 10-22) (viewing it in its prophetic aspect,) is foreshown the connection between heaven and earth in the kingdom—"The Bridal of the earth and sky," in the day when the angels of God shall be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

Sweet spot! 'twas surely hallow'd ground,
Where heaven itself diffused around
The breath of peace and love;
There Jacob slept—there angels hung
O'er him from whom the Saviour sprung,
To guard him from above.

He slept—but who that saw him there,
Beneath the chill and midnight air,
Upon the dewy sod,
Lorn as he seem'd, could e'er have guess'd
How bright a glimpse of glory bless'd,
That favour'd child of God!

The gloomy cloud, by sorrow spread,
Around the sleeper's dreamy head,
Had melted into light;
And, lo! a vision too intense
In splendor for weak mortal sense,
Blazed on his inward sight.

A stairway of stupendous height
Led upward through the gates of light
On to the throne of God,
While to and fro, 'twixt heaven and earth,
Fair holy ones, of seraph-birth,
Its steps of glory trod.

Some wafted Israel's fervent prayer
Along each heaven-ascending stair,
E'en to the ear of Love,
While myriads more, as swift as thought,
Full many a goodly blessing brought
In answer from above.

Sweet dream! its memory oft would cheer
The Patriarch's soul through many a year
Of sorrow, fear, and strife;
He loved it, for he there could see
A beauteous emblem, Lord, of Thee,
Thou glorious Way of Life!

Through Thee the Father's love descends,
Through Thee our love to Him ascends,
And prayer and praise arise;
While every promise, Lord, of Thine,
What is it but a step divine
'To lead us to the skies?

Thy brethren, as with holy feet
They climb those steps, may feel it sweet
At times to glance below,
And wonder at the vast abyss
That severs yonder world of bliss
From depths of endless woe.

Or, sweeter still, to look on high,
Where, through the glorious opening sky,
Those steps of life ascend,
Each broader, brighter than the last,
Faith boldly mounts, till all are past,
And all in glory end.

Love there will crown what Love began,
Its wondrous ways of grace to man,
In its sweet home above;
All, all, O Lord, will there proclaim,
Through endless years, Thy blessed name—
SUPREME, ALMIGHTY LOVE!

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

MISCELLANEA.

No. VI.

The late Rev. Dr. James Hamilton.—On the evening of the Lord's day after the funeral, the Rev. Henry Allon delivered a very able discourse from the words, "A little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father." He said: It is but "a little while" since Dr. Hamilton took upon him the ministry of this church, and yet how much, both of usefulness and fame he has in that little while achieved. But a few months later than his my own ministry commenced, and throughout it has been gladdened by his friendship, strengthened by his help. Our last reciprocation of ministerial service dated but a few months back, when he discoursed to my congregation of heavenly felicities and glories

like one who beheld their dawn, or had plucked fruit from overhanging trees in the Paradise of God. It is but "a little while" since, in the common brightness and joy of new married life, we kept holiday together on the coast; and yet since then years have passed—years of pleasant and precious friendship—and children have grown up and married, and home joys have ripened to an autumn richness. Since then books have been written of felicitous beauty and fragrant sanctity, in which as into pelucid depths we look and see a loving Christ-like heart, that neither assault nor passion disturbs; books in which genius and piety have been joined in a marriage upon which he himself has pronounced a benediction, and which, by their goodness and grace, have refreshed and gladdened tens of thousands. It is but "a little while," and yet who, among the servants of old, has won from his fellow-servants a higher place of esteem, a more tender place of love? In the name of all his brethren not of his own section of the Church, I confidently testify here to the great honour and affection in which he was universally held. Who of us ever thought of his Presbytery, or felt that he was of another section of the Church than his own?—In our pulpits he was seen as naturally, and loved as familiarly, if not as fully, as in his own. For beyond any of his brethren in London, perhaps in England, he was, partly by circumstances, but chiefly by personal character, a common centre round whom men of all churches gathered: and in his presence they forgot their differences, and felt themselves simply common servants of Jesus Christ. His catholicity knew no disabilities, save lack of goodness, and by a resistless spell it constrained the same recognition in others; under the influence of his genial brotherliness all men felt their brotherhood. His face ever beamed with a manly love for all that was lovable; his voice was never heard in strife, save to soothe and subdue it. Of his great gifts I leave others to speak; but they alone would not have won for him the place which he occupies in all our hearts. It is but "a little while;" his course seems scarcely fulfilled; his purposes are broken off, and yet who shall estimate the spiritual influence of his ministry, the light emitted from his teaching, the emotion kindled by his sympathies, the purposes quickened by his urgency? A ministry of spiritual things defies all arithmetic; it imposes restraints, it imparts encouragements, of which men themselves are unconscious. It is a subtle presence and power that touches and moulds men's hearts and lives. Its effects are seen after many days and in far off places; in lonely rooms, in prison cells, in places where sorrow retires to weep, in dark struggles with temptation in the wilderness, and great agonies of soul when the bitter cup is put into our hands to drink, in secret workings of conscience, in scarcely whispered prayers, in struggling trembling vows, in ships at sea, in squatters' homes, on battle fields, in the crowd and stress of city life. Who shall speak of young men attracted hither by the genius of the preacher, and won to virtue and Christ by his wise gentleness and love; of the word in season to them that are weary, which his spiritual sagacity and sympathy so well-qualified him to speak; of fidelity stimulated, patience encouraged, hope inspired, and faith sustained, until the dark valley of the shadow of death was passed? It is but "a little while," but his ministry has left a large record in "the Lamb's book of life."

THE SCULPTOR'S DREAM.

"One Sabbath day, wandering in the woods, to escape from the sounds of mirth, and the rude jests of the coarse-minded villagers, Michael sat down on a bank to rest, and, unawares, he fell asleep. The songs of the birds filled the wood with harmony, and in his dream he envied the winged creatures their vocal powers. Then the sounds died away: not a chirp was heard; and in the silence a thrush, whose notes had been the loudest in the chorus, who was perched on the lowest branch of a tree, took upon himself to address the flowers that grew at the sleeper's feet, wild roses and anemones, delicate bluebells, lilies and stately foxgloves, with many others alike fair and frail—and the thrush said:—

"I cannot think why you flowers were

made only to bloom in the spring, and die at the first sign of winter. You have a kind of life, it is true, but better had you been made senseless stones; you have no breath to praise the Lord; nor are you durable enough to build any memorial of His goodness. All the year round we sing, and warble forth our praises in this and other lands; sometimes soaring up to heaven's gate, until the angels hear us; sometimes close to earth, calling on men to praise the Lord; and even if men clip our wings and cage us in a narrow prison, we do not forget our hymns, and our little ones next year will take up the same strains. But you flowers—creeping along the face of the earth, never soaring—what glory hath the Maker in your lives?"

"Then the rose spake. 'Thy senses are dull, vain bird.' It is true we cannot awaken the music you boast of, and yet we were not made for nought. The bright hues that dye the least among us were painted by the Creator's hand; we reflect some portion of His beauty; and man makes fruitless efforts to rival our exquisite tints. The stones that you deem better than ourselves are used to immortalise our graceful forms; the painter and the carver never weary of imitating our endless variety; thus acknowledging a genius greater than their own. Besides, the Almighty Maker permits us to be emblems even of Himself. I speak to all of His love. He calls Himself by my name; and yonder lily reminds the passer by of His purity and humility. We are faint types of the immortal flowers that bloom in the gardens of Paradise; and no reflection of heavenly graces can man afford to miss. We are not ungrateful; our office in the service and worship is different from yours; while your songs re-echo, we ceaselessly offer up the fragrant incense, sweet odours that God doth not despise; for each morn and eve He droppeth the refreshing dew into our open petals. When His sun shines we lift our faces to it and smile; when His wind passeth over us we bend our heads in submission; and although at the appointed time, we droop and wither, yet the seeds that fall from our bosoms, or that the breezes carry away, will spring up next year to delight man's eye, and to remind him of a hand Divine. No, we cannot sing; but we can be beautiful in our place and season."

"And then the sleeper awoke, happy and glad, and gathering a handful of the flowers beside him, resolved that they should be an example to him, in art and in life."—Miss Sibree.

THE MIRACLE OF GROWTH.

"What is growth? It is the increase of a living body according to a fixed pattern, and by materials derived from without, materials changed into its own substance or substances."

Air particles, water particles, earth particles, have been drawn from around, under the stimulus of the sunbeam, and the warmth of the earth's bed, and they have been changed into corn-root and corn-leaf particles, and have become alive, full of a power of drawing and changing the particles from the earth and air by the same manner. Suppose we could see this process magnified so that the particles should seem as large as marbles.—What should we say if we could see the gaseous atoms of carbon or nitrogen first gathered from the air, then changed into something quite different, and seen moving about and fixing themselves just where it was necessary, in order to complete the pattern, and make increase of the growth—here some marching to the root, others to the stalk, others to the ear, with its chaff and flour. It a million variously-coloured marbles could be thrown upon the ground, and we could see them building themselves up into the pattern of a tree—we should say as we watched the process, Why, they are alive! and each of them seems to have sense, to know where to go, and where to stay, as if each one comprehended the whole pattern, and saw where his place ought to be! But no; they cannot have this sense.

Is it the root that thinks, then, for all the rest of the plant? But who thought for the root before it existed, when there was nothing except the bare grain of wheat thrown into the ground? And if the root could think, how could it transmit its thoughts up to the ear, and command the particles to go into the shape of bran envelopes, or to go inside them and become flour, and then to pack

themselves in a form so orderly, beautiful, and secure? There must be some power distinct from the force possessed by each particle, and superior to all, which directs the movements of each, so as to bring out the predestined figure, as the general in command directs the movements of every soldier on the field.—What is this power? You say it is life.—Yes, that is a beautiful word, unless it means pattern-forming mind. These wonders conduct us by a very short process of reasoning to a Spirit of Life, which is a Spirit of Thought, of Order, and of Power—the all-pervading Spirit of God, who 'maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains,' who 'so clothes the grass of the field,' and who thus 'openeth His hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing.' It is not then a piece of poetry, but profoundest truth, when we say that it is God who 'giveth food to all flesh,' and whose 'mercy endureth forever.' He who gave the manna gives the corn. And he who will not acknowledge God in nature would not have acknowledged Him, even if he had seen the manna lying like a broad wreath of driven snow around the camp of Israel."—Rev. Edward White.

Lamps, pitchers, and trumpets.—'Words are lamps, are pitchers, and are trumpets.—Preaching to the intellect—to the intelligence—is as a lamp; it sheds light over truths, over processes of argument, over means of conviction; preaching to the conscience is as a trumpet,—it calls up the soul from slumber, it makes it restless and unquiet; preaching to the experience is as a pitcher,—it bears refreshment, it cools and it calms the fever of the spirit, and it consoles and comforts the heart. Ordinarily, the preacher should combine all these qualities; but there are those whose faculties express themselves in one or the other of them; and, therefore, the image justifies a generalisation of the life of the preacher beneath its distinctive sign."—Rev. Paxton Hood.

Illustration.—"There can be no doubt that for the purpose of teaching, one illustration is worth a thousand abstractions; they are the windows of speech, through them truths shine, and ordinary minds fail to perceive truth clearly unless it is presented to them through their medium. One of the most loved methods of illustration ever has been the parable, but this is a high, rare, and very difficult power; children love tales, fairy tales, parables. The better sort of grown-up children we fancy, like them too; for indeed, they are constantly doing that for us which we are all trying to do for ourselves, in one way or other—namely, to realize.

No man will be a favorite talker to children who does not speak in parables; and the teacher to the mighty multitudes will be efficient in the proportion to his power of wielding admirably the parable. But it requires some of the most varied powers of the human mind, and it is difficult to wield it well.—Ibid.

"The marks are left!"—You have heard of the child whose father told him that whenever he did anything wrong a nail should be driven into a post, and when he did what was good he might pull one out. There were a great many nails driven into the post but the child tried very hard to get the post cleared of the nails by striving to do right. At length he was so successful in his struggles with himself that the last nail was drawn out of the post. The father was just about to praise the child, when, stooping down to kiss him, he was startled to see tears fast rolling down his face. "Why, my boy, why do you cry? Are not all the nails gone from the post?" "Oh, yes! the nails are all gone, but the marks are left." That is a familiar illustration, but don't despise it because of that. It illustrates the experience of many a gray old sire, who looking upon the traces of his old sins as they yet rankle in his conscience, would give a hundred worlds to live himself back into young manhood, that he might obliterate the searing imprint of its follies. Have you never heard of fossil-rain? In the stratum of the old red sandstone there are to be seen the marks of showers of rain which fell centuries and centuries ago, and they are so plain and perfect that they clearly indicate the way the wind was drifting, and in what direction the tempest, planted from the sky. So may the tracks