

This issue out of place.

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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### THE BAG OF GOLD.

A wealthy monarch once proclaimed  
That he'd bestow a bag of gold  
Upon the man who proved himself  
Best qualified to use it well.  
The trial came, and many strove  
To make the golden prize their own.  
The monarch heard, but judged them all  
Unworthy of the royal gift.  
At length he raised his eyes and saw,  
Approaching at a slower pace  
Than moves the tortoise of the brook,  
A cripple with his friendly crutch.  
And while he looked a cartman stopped  
And kindly helped the cripple in,  
Conveyed him to the public court,  
Then quickly turned to go his way.  
"Call back that cartman," cried the king,  
His word was instantly obeyed,  
The man returned reluctantly  
And stood before his sovereign lord.  
"Hast thou no wish," the monarch asked  
To gain this treasure at my feet?"  
"Small wish indeed, O king," he said,  
"For many need it more than I."  
"A noble man," exclaimed the king,  
"In thee thy Maker's image shines,  
To thee I freely give this gold,  
Believing thou wilt use it well."  
S. S.

## Religious.

### RELIGIOUS HEROISM OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS.

Now observe that in their dealing with all these subjects (fate, sin, and death) the Greeks never shrink from horror; down to its uttermost depth, to its most appalling physical detail, they strive to sound the secrets of sorrow. For them there is no passing by on the other side, no turning away the eyes to vanity from pain. Literally, they have not "lifted up their souls unto vanity." Whether there be consolation for them or not, neither apathy nor blindness shall be their saviours; if, for them, thus knowing the facts of the grief of earth, any hope, relief, or triumph may hereafter seem possible,—well; but if not, still hopeless, reliefless, eternal, the sorrow shall be met face to face. This Hector, so righteous, so merciful, so brave, has nevertheless to look upon his dearest brother in miserableness death. His own soul passes away in hopeless sobs through the throat-wound of the Grecian spear. That is one aspect of things in this world, a fair world truly, but having, among its other aspects, this one, highly ambiguous. Meeting it boldly as they may, gazing right into the skeleton face of it, the ambiguity remains; nay, in some sort gains upon them. We trusted in the gods;—we thought that wisdom and courage would save us. Our wisdom and courage themselves deceive us to our death. Athena had the aspect of Deiphobus—terror of the enemy. She has not terrified him, but left us, in our mortal need. And, beyond that mortality, what hope have we? Nothing is dear to us on that horizon, nor comforting. Funeral honours; perhaps also rest; perhaps a shadowy life—artless, joyless, loveless. No devices in that darkness of the grave, nor daring, nor delight. Neither marrying nor giving in marriage, nor casting of spears, nor rolling of chariots, nor voice of fame. Lapped in pale Elysian mist, chilling the forgetful heart and feeble frame, shall we waste on for ever? Can the dust of earth claim more of immortality than this? Or shall we have even so much as rest? May we, indeed, lie down again in the dust, or have our sins not hidden from us, even the things that belong to that peace? May not chance and the whirl of passion govern us there; when there shall be no thought, nor work, nor wisdom, nor breathing of the soul? Be it so. With no better reward, no brighter hope, we will be men while we may: men, just, and strong, and fearless, and up to our power, perfect.

Athena herself, our wisdom and our strength, may betray us;—Phœbus, our sun, smite us with plague, or hide his face from us helpless;—Jove and all the powers of fate oppress us, or give us up to destruction. While we live, we will hold fast our integrity; no weak tears shall blind us, no untimely tremors abate our strength of arm nor swiftness of limb. The gods have given us at least this glorious body and this righteous conscience; these will ever keep bright and pure to the end. So may we fall to misery, but not to baseness; so may we sink to sleep, but not to shame. And herein was conquest. So defied, the betraying and accusing shadows shrank back; the mysterious horror subdued itself to majestic sorrow. Death was swallowed up in victory. Their blood, which seemed to be poured out upon the ground, rose into hyacinthine flowers. All the beauty of earth opened to them; they had ploughed into its darkness, and they reaped its gold; the gods, in whom they had trusted through all semblance of oppression, came down to love them and be their helpmates. All nature round them became divine,—one harmony of power and peace. The sun burnt them not by day, nor the moon by night; the earth opened no more her jaws into the pit; the sea whitened no more against them the teeth of his devouring waves. Sun, and moon, and earth, and sea,—all melted into grace and love; the fatal arrows rang not now at the shoulders of Apollo the healer; lord of life and of the three great spirits of life—Care, Memory and Melody.

Great Artemis guarded their flocks by night; Selene kissed in love the eyes of those who slept. And from all came the help of heaven to body and soul; a strange spirit lifting the lovely limbs; strange light glowing on the golden hair; and strangest comfort filling the trustful heart, so that they could put off their armour, and lie down to sleep,—their work well done, whether at the gates of their temples or of their mountains; accepting the death they once thought terrible, as the gift of Him who knew and granted what was best.—From Ruskin's *Modern Painters*.

### HOW A CHURCH SHOULD TREAT ITS PASTOR.

A friend sends us the address made to the First Baptist church in Petersburg, Va., on the installation of the Rev. T. T. Eaton as their pastor, Rev. Dr. William E. Hatcher, recently their pastor, now of Richmond. The counsels he gave were not essentially unlike those that many churches have listened to on such occasions, but it is not often that those good things are so happily expressed. We quote some paragraphs:

I urge you to guard his feelings. Give him your kindest smile, your freshest and mellowest tones, your heartiest greetings and your finest courtesies. Remember that the tie binding him to you is a peculiar, sensitive thing—after all, more a sentiment than a conviction, far more of affection than of contract—so tender that it takes not much to bruise it, and hurt, it may never recover. An ill-chosen word—a rude act—even a stolid look—almost a breath may touch this gentle chord, and hush forever its music. Have you a contact with him? Keep it. Pay him what you owe him; pay it when due; pay it all; pay it as a debt, not as a charity; pay it unsought—and gracefully, or failing to pay it, there will be debt and trouble. It is not the nature of men to love long or well those to whom they are in debt. No pastor need expect to hold long a church that does not pay him promptly nor be very useful while he stays. The unmet obligations of a church to its pasture will sooner or later engender alienation, not so likely on the part of the pastor as of the church. Paul urged us to "owe no man anything but to love," partly, I suppose, because he knew it is hard to love those

to whom we owe anything. But beyond this there is much. So many pleasant things that can be said to him—say them; they won't hurt him; so many quiet helps can be given in his work—give them; so many generous things can be done for him—do them; so many generous things can be done for him—do them; so many kindnesses that will burst on him with surprise—let them burst. Keep his heart aglow—fling the sunshine on his track—make his life a feast of affection and I promise that if he is half the man they say he is, he will make you the very grandest pastor you ever had.

Next to the grace of God, the most essential element of power in a preacher is a good name. Indeed, not grace nor genius can supply its want. To a great extent a minister's reputation is in the keeping of his church, and should be counted a sacred thing. To guard it is a duty dictated not only by justice but by the honor and welfare of the church.

No man is perfect; the best have faults, the greatest have infirmities, and the wisest are open to criticism. Your pastor will be often before you at his weakest moments. His faults will pursue him into the pulpit, come with him to your house, hang on him in the street, and cleave to him always. I do not ask you to say he is perfect, or to commit the brainless error of trying to prove to everybody that he is the only living preacher. Don't murder him with indiscreet and excessive praise, but speak well of him. Don't stab him with your sneers, don't give your opinions of his sermons (particularly when you were asleep, or bilious, or talking, or thinking about other things and did not hear them) by curling your lip or impressively declining to express any opinion; don't join his critics and censors. Speak favorably as you can of him, his sermons, and his work. Remember that the community and the world will take their opinions of him largely from you. An important part of his outfit here is a good repute "with those that are without," and the best workmen for furnishing this outfit are "those that are within."

In almost every church a pastor finds three classes of people. First, those who hail his coming with immense parade. They will suffocate him with attention, and crown him with gifts. They love him with a fiery and consuming affection. They are ready to eat him up, and before long they wish they had done it.

Next, those who show no enthusiasm or affection till he is going away, and then they can outourn the entire eldership of Ephesus. Your pastor asks no resolutions when he leaves, nor monument when dead, but support and sympathy now.

Then there are some who greet him warmly when he comes, cheer and help him while he stays, and bless him and weep when he goes. In this church there are many of these. The exceptions are few and unworthy of a fear. These constitute the pastor's bodyguard. They will protect, sustain and uphold him. With such a host of saintly men and women to follow him, the incoming pastor must succeed. May grace and mercy rest upon you, and guide you forward in a career of richest usefulness.—N. Y. Ex. & Chron.

### THE BUNYAN BEFORE JOHN.

BY ARTHUR GILMAN.

John Bunyan was a product of the Puritan period of English history. It was an age of great preachers, and a time when, as Mr. Green says truly, the English became "the people of a book, and that book was the Bible." Disputes about doctrines ran high between divines able to cut close and to strike solid blows. It was not a time when the imagination was permitted to lie fallow, as the sermons of Taylor and South, to mention no others, sufficiently testify. Nor was it a time

when beauty and amusements were entirely despised or ignored, as may be proved by the portrait of many a fair Puritan and by the confessions of the author of "Paradise Lost," who was also the author of the "Masque of Comus," the admirer of the old romances of the Round Table, and a reveller in the ideal chivalry of Spenser.

It was an age of ambition also; for Cromwell raised the fame of England abroad at least as high as it had ever before stood. He dreamed of greater achievements as the champion of Protestantism. He fondly hoped to follow with prouder deeds his haughty demands for redress for the slaughter of the "saints whose bones lay scattered on the Alpine mountains cold." But he played his game of statecraft with worldly-wiser and less honourable men, whose ambition he unwittingly subserved. Cromwell died, Puritanism fell, and Bunyan went to Bedford Gaol to write his allegory.

If we retrace the history of England three centuries, we find ourselves in another period of theological discussion, another ruler is dreaming of extending the sway of England, and another author is writing his visions and depicting the wicket gate, Vanity Fair, and the trials of a pilgrimage through life. The efforts of Edward III. were put forth for the purpose of exerting a benign or beneficial moral influence upon Continental affairs; but they had the effect of raising English patriotism to a great degree and of stimulating the people to all kinds of exertion.

The time of Edward III., no less truly than that of the Commonwealth, was marked by intense study of the Bible, with the spirit of which both Bunyan and his prototype were full. Mr Lowell tells us that Bunyan had undoubtedly read Spenser, and it would not appear unnatural if it were to be proved that he had also studied "Piers Plowman." Be that as it may, the resemblance of the old allegory and the new is an interesting topic for investigation.

Poetry is the production of an earlier age than prose, and in these cases "Piers Plowman," written from 1362 to 1393, is in verse, while the "Pilgrim's Progress," given to the world in 1678, is, as we all know, a prose composition. The best and latest students agree in holding that the author of "Piers Plowman" (or, to give the title in full, of "The Vision concerning Piers Plowman") is still unknown. He was an artist, in his way entirely unique, a shrewd observer, a lively descriptive writer, a vigorous satirist, an imaginative poet, an earnest partisan of the doctrines of the Bible as against the corruptions of the friars, and a reverent preacher of salvation through Christ.

When he came to the work—and it was the work of a generation of time—he adopted the form of the allegory and the plan of a dream. A dream is an airy nothing, that is very difficult to fix upon paper or even to frame in words. It is subject to no rules. It begins with no formal announcement, and it generally ends in *medias res*. There is no plot; but the mind rambles from topic to topic, from place to place, with no apparent reason. Such are few of the traits of the dream, and they are traits that mark the vision of "Piers Plowman." It would not be unnatural for an author coming, like Bunyan, after such an original, to give more regularity of plan and execution to his production. Let us suppose that the author of "Piers Plowman," after much thought on the subject, actually did go to church or to some brookside among the Malvern Hills, and indulge in reveries such as he has written down in alliterative verse for our edification.

Let us suppose that on these occasions he gave free range to his imagination and imposed little restraint upon his thoughts, permitting the one to soar as high as it would and the other to wander wide, and that, as he says, he then wrote out his conceptions with little effort to make them accord with rules of literary propriety or of artistic

perfectness. The result would be very much like what he really did produce.

Nine times he dreamed, and although his visions were as varied in topic and circumstance as could well be imagined by a man not in a reverie, they bear more or less remotely upon the general subject of man's journey through life, his risks of hell, and his hopes of heaven. First, he sees a field full of folk is made acquainted with the wicked ways of the people, their folly, thoughtlessness, and deceit. He sees bribery at work everywhere, and he re-echoes in different form the words of Grosseteste Bishop of Lincoln, uttered a century before: "Oh, money, money, how vast is thy power everywhere—how irresistible at Rome!"

Again he dreams. The field full of folk is before him. Reason is preaching, and so effectively that there ensues a wonderful revival. The seven deadly sins are converted, and a thousand people take upon themselves the vows of a new life. They are, however only converted. They feel the need of a guide. A palmer fresh from Sinai approaches. They appeal to him; but he knows only another sort of pilgrimage—of earth, not of heaven. At last Piers Plowman appears and offers to be their guide. He has a half-acre to are (to plough—Latin *arare*, see Gen. xlv. 6); but after that is done he will go with them. Meanwhile, he gives them the following description of the way they ought to take. Go through Meekness till ye come to Conscience. Love God loyally above all. Love your neighbour next, and only do to him what you would that he should do to you at all times. Follow the brook Buxom-of-speech (buxom, obedient), and wash yourself at the ford Honour-thy-Father. Pass by the fields Swear-not-but-it-be-for-need and Covet-not-men's-chattels-nor-their-wives, and the stocks Slay-not and Steal-not. Turn from the Hill Bear-not-false-witness, and pluck no flowers there. Then you will see Say-sooth, and will come to a court as clear as the sun, surrounded by a moat of mercy protected with a wall of wit and battlements of Chistendom, and buttressed by Believe-sooth. The houses, halls, and chambers are roofed with no lead but love and loyal words, and the gates are barred with buxomness. The bridge over the moat is Pray-well. The gateposts are penances and prayers of the saints, and the hinges of the gates are alms-deeds.

Grace is the gate-keeper, with a helper called Amend-you. Pray them to pull up the wicket that the woman shut when Adam and Eve did eat apples unroasted. If Grace grant thee to go in, thou shalt see Truth enthroned in thine heart, adorned with a chain of Charity. But you must beware of Wrath, a wicked shrew, for he bears enmity to Truth, and poketh forth pride, that you may vaunt your virtues, and be driven out haply for a hundred winters, the door being latched and locked. Neverless you might even then get in again, for there are seven sisters that serve Truth as porters at the posterns of the palace. They are Abstinence, Humility, Patience, Peace, Largeness, Charity, and Chastity. If you are akin to any of them, they will help you.

"Now, forsooth," quoth a cut-purse, "I have no tin there."  
"Nor I," said an ape-trainer,  
"Nor I," added the wafer-maker.  
"Yea," said Piers Plowman, and poked them all to good. "Meroy is a maid there, and hath might over them all; and she is sib [akin] to all the sinful."  
Thus Peirs points out the way; but the converts, with the exception of some who pray to be excused, go to work, and the remainder of the vision details their doings. It closes with an account of a ball of pardon given to Piers by Truth for the pilgrims. A priest asks to see it, and, reading only the last verse of the 25th chapter of Matthew, exclaims:—  
"I find no pardon here. It is only do well and have good; do evil and have evil."