

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XXV., No. 24.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, June 16, 1880.

WHOLE SERIES.
Vol. XLIV., No. 24.

Poetry.

Maxims in Rhyme.

BY REV. J. CLARK.

Simple faith in God is worth
More than all the gains of earth.
Foes may rise and thrones may fall:
God is mightier far than all.
All that men have done and said
Lives when they themselves are dead.
Love is neither bought nor sold;
Truth is weightier far than gold.
Woes have come to courts and kings
Through neglect of trifling things.
Honest toil is no disgrace;
Pride is always out of place.
Greatest evils oft begin
In some unsuspected sin.
He who made the smallest flower
Regulates the tempest's power.
Steady toil and earnest prayer
Often prove a cure for care.
Cowards dread a pigmy's blows;
Heroes conquer giant foes.
Those who wish to cross the seas
Must not lose the favoring breeze.
A whispered lie is just as wrong
As one that thunders loud and long.
When you work and when you play
Call to mind the judgment day.
Those who seek the Lord too late
Perish just outside the gate.

John Ploughman's Almanack.

Religious.

Pastor and People.

THEIR MUTUAL RELATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

BY THE REV. S. H. VIRGIN.

The mutual relations between pastor and people are of a business character. There is a contract. The pastor is to give spiritual toil to people, the people are to give money to him. He has not contracted to build a church edifice, to gather crowds, to raise the money for his salary, to collect deficiencies, to care for walls and carpets and furnaces, to advertise services; in a word, to be the Board of Trustees. It is a huge indecency when any such work is left to the pastor. Mr. Beecher's bit of autobiography concerning his sexton work in his first church is always to me more discredit to the church than complimentary to him. The business relation implies mutual duties. The pastor who is also the public lecturer, the newspaper editor, the ready advocate of any new scheme that lessens work for those to whom it has been pledged, the pastor who finds abundant work abroad to keep him from his people, violates his right to the pastoral office. His individual relation to Christ indeed calls for much toil that may lie outside parish limits, but neglect of the business contract is dishonesty.

The people are bound to keep their business contract to the letter. If income from pews is delayed, if extra expenses are assumed, if—why enumerate?—under all circumstances while the contract lasts the people are bound to business accuracy in their peculiar business relations to their pastor. The first day of the month, and not the third, fourth, or fifth, is the day for payment if it is so "nominated in the bond." He will not probably demand it with Shylock severity, but the mutual relations which we are considering here require it. If the business of the parish is to be conducted by the pastor, if plans for the securing of the necessary income and like toils are to proceed from him, let us at once secure the endowment of a chair of secular business in all our theological seminaries. It will be as important as the new chair of theology and science at Andover.

In settling the terms of the business contract the higher relation of people to pastor is such as to require from them not the exercise of business smartness at the expense of continuous anxiety on the pastor's part, but such provision as will remove all unnecessary care concerning financial matters, that he may more effectively give his whole soul and spirit to spiritual work. When

we remember that the average pay of Christian ministers in this country is the same as the pay of the better class of manual day-labourers, and, of course, much less than the pay of journeyman artisans, it will be conceded that this is an important element in our discussion. It is well said, "because a minister is to suffer martyrdom cheerfully for Christ, no Christian congregation need suppose that it is called upon to furnish the faggots and the fire."

These mutual relations are likewise of a spiritual character.

This relation is not easily described, for it is subtle and profound. The pastor bears to the people collectively and individually the relation of a teacher and spiritual helper. It is by the communication of the truth that the kingdom of Christ is to be built up. The truth is the nourishment of every soul. The pastor must therefore be a skilled workman in the Word of God. If there be failure here the primary relation in the pastorate is vitiated. Not the general but the special and personal adaptation of God's Word to the needs of each is the pastor's work. His mind must give audience to all his people, and his heart be large enough to superbly entertain them all. His relation is not that of a pope, to hurl the truth in authoritative dogmas against the people, demanding their acceptance of it, but rather the relation of a burning-glass through whose crystalline structure the truth may be focussed on the soul to do its own blessed work. His relation is not that of a personal conscience, so becoming responsible for all decisions in matters of individual duty, but rather the relation of a beacon light in whose brilliant rays both good and evil are disclosed. His relation to the poor, the suffering, the sorrowing, the sinning among his people is that of a tender, strong, affectionate guide to Christ. To neglect one such is to be untrue to the established relation. Personal ease and pleasure, the accumulation of intellectual treasure, the hours of sleep, even, may all be held secondary to the sublime privilege of helping spiritually any one of a pastor's people. The fragrance of his own spiritual life is imparted to them as the Damascus blades received the fragrant fumes from the alchemist. The faithful pastor can be recognised in his people. His relation is as close as that of a gardener to his growing plants, as a shepherd to his feeding and sometimes endangered flock, as a mother to her developing household. The thought of personal emolument, the greed of gain, makes impossible the relation of a true pastor.

As people are neither sheep nor plants, plants, as pastor has no omniscience or prescience, the relation of the people to him requires constant communication on their part. The most watchful pastor cannot know, ought not to be expected to know, of all bodily ailments and soul sickness save as he is informed. The Bible does not require it of him. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church." The relation of the people to him is that of rational human beings. Indiscriminate pastoral visitation is, therefore, often a frivolous waste of time. The organized activity of the church should make apparent to the pastor the needs of his personal ministry. The spiritual relation of people to pastor requires that they also should seek his spiritual growth by ceaseless prayer, by frequent interviews in which their spiritual treasure is shared with him, by a generous supply of all that feeds the soul and spirit. He cannot ruthlessly crush the freshness of their new thoughts, of truth—they may not harness him into the old forms of expression, nor forbid him candid utterance of his latest deep convictions. As the faults of a people require reproof, the neglects of a minister demand the same, and their mutual relations ought effectively to secure it. "A church must conserve its high spiritual interests, and if a pastor stand in the way of these he must be cut off."

Related thus mutually to each other, each must make effective for Christ the toils of the other, pastor by prompting

and directing the energies of the people, people by promoting and supporting all the agencies of Christian activity. Thus and thus only can the local church have increase of power and noble development. It then becomes a hive of spiritual industry. Its material interests are conducted with energy and discretion, its spiritual interests thrive, and a cluster of helpful agencies spring up within it. The community feels the power of the Christ-life thus expressed. There is no periodic excitement about a new pastor; an exchange for a single Sabbath does not provoke discussion about the pastor's leaving; but mutually faithful in prayer, in affection, in toil, the heavens become generous with blessings, the pastor feeds his flock to a good old age, and children's children tell the story of a strong and happy church.

The Permanence of the Poetical Element in Man.

ESSAY DELIVERED AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF ACADIA COLLEGE, 1880.

BY BENJAMIN F. SIMPSON.

The origin of poetry seems coeval with that of the race. Language itself, the expression of human thought and feeling, is an outgrowth of the poetical faculty. In its nascent period, each word was a picture,—a realization of an inward sentiment; or in other words, a poem.

Throughout the development of literature, poetry has, for the most part, held a central position. Its growth and development have not been the result of mere accident or caprice, but they have been governed by laws as unchangeable as the human constitution.

There must be harmony among all higher truths, however diverse the subjects of which they treat. In their higher relations, neither science, philosophy, nor criticism is antagonistic to poetry. As far as each has a subjective existence it is near of kin. Yet poetry, though springing from a common source with these other forms of thought, is in its expression anterior to them, and often forecasts results, which with them are the product of subsequent investigations. The most prominent philosophers in all ages have followed on the trend of the poetic seer; and have found their more labored theories anticipated in the deeper intuitions of creative genius. One poet and philosopher declares that the distinction between philosophy and poetry is apparent only, and to the injury of both.

As all forms of truth rest on a common foundation; so, arch-like, they will all meet in their final perfection. To set forth such truths is the peculiar work of literature. All forms of literature, then, as to their ultimate elements, are coincident; and the small discords which appear under certain conditions, like ripples on the surface, hinder not the uniform flow of this stream of accumulative truth.

What, then, in this higher state of literature is to be the position of Poetry, as compared with other departments of composition? Believing it to be antecedent both in time and importance, we shall accord to it the central position, around which will cluster all other forms of expressed thought, as branches around the parent trunk.

In the dawning period of letters, other forms of literature were, doubtless, called into existence; but as the poetical creation lay nearest the heart of the race, it is almost the sole product of this period that has been preserved and transmitted to us. Man in his multitudinous environments, was the theme of poets then as now. It was either arms and the man, heroism and the man, or oppression and suffering and the man,—the one factor remaining constant, while the other only varied with the circumstance. Moreover, if we examine into the conditions of these early poetic effusions, we shall find that they did not appear first, because they were nearest the surface;

but were called into being by extraordinary events, which acted with an irresistible potency on the deepest feelings of the race.

When our modern culture has so touched the centre of man's nature, we may expect to see poetry again assert its true position in the current literature of the times. As the strings of an Æolian harp, when breathed on by the gentle zephyrs, give forth their peculiar notes; so the deeper chords of the soul, when touched by the agencies of a perfect culture, will give forth many such thoughts as in any age will find fit utterance alone in poetry.

The real requisites of poetry are in all ages the same; which are—the proper subjective and objective conditions to suggest it, faculties of intense thought and feeling to conceive it, a true imagination or inspiration to direct it, and language as a medium to convey it. The poet is the representative man of the race. Why does he please us, if not that he shares, in common with us, all our feelings and emotions; while with him they are much more intense. Thus sings the Laureate:

"The poet in a golden clime was born,
With golden stars above;
Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn
Of scorn,
The love of love."

Having thus a common interest with mankind in general, he lightens for them the burdens of life, and opens up new sources of enjoyment before them. His mind is a treasure-house in which he gathers up all that is most beautiful in surrounding nature, and then paints it to the eye with the skill of a true artist. The blush of morn, the bright glow of noon, and the pageantry of the sunset; all the lights and shades in nature and in life, are portrayed by him in colors more charming than the rich hue of the rainbow. As our paths in life are strewn with the sweet blossoms of Spring; so the poet decorates with the flowers of poesy, the paths of our intellectual existence. He lifts us, at times, above the region of sense, and bridging the chasm which separates the visible from the invisible, supplements the defects of the former, with the perfections of the latter.

Neither is poetry dependent on any peculiar form of expression. A philosophic theory may contain the elements of poetry as well as the most finished verse. Not even is language indispensable; the well-arranged grounds and castle of a Feudal Lord, might be called the poem of his life. "The Lady of the Lake" did not display more poetical taste than its author's residence at Abbotsford. The universe may be considered a most complete poem, fashioned by the hand of the Infinite.

The subjects of poetry are most widely distributed. The Ode, the Elegy, and the Sonnet are all realized in the scenes of every-day life; and so, are not Tragedy, Comedy, and Farce? The objective world,

"To him who in the love of nature,
Holds communion with her visible forms
Still speaks a various language."

So there is not a subjective feeling which may not become so intensified as to be a fit theme for the poet. Some such true sons of the muses as Burns and Wordsworth have taught us that no very elaborate theme is necessary to the true expression of poetry; but each perfection in nature is vocal with sweet melody, to him whose soul is so attuned to its harmony as to be able to catch up the strain.

Poetry, then, is not an exotic, in any place where man exists, from snow-clad hills of the North to the sun-scorched plains of the tropics. No race of men has yet been found, among whom may not be discovered traces of poetical composition. True they may be only fragments; yet crude as they were, they served a purpose, both in the case of him who uttered them, and of those who heard them. Even in the darkest places of earth when chill adversity seems to have crushed out every other higher aspiration of man, we find these fragments of a heaven-born poesy, which

ever wrung out from the human soul—crushed in the wine-press of affliction: "Short swallow flights of song, that dip Their wings in tears and skim away."

No worthy poet of any age has yet learned that superficial doctrine of our modern critic, that education is detrimental to his vocation; rather have they all been conscious of a plastic energy within them, strong enough to mould the products of their regulative faculties into forms of the greatest potency, in the service of the poetical element.

What though poetry be imaginative, and in some sense fictitious? it is still in a higher sense real. The shadow has no existence without the substance. The ultimate ground-work of fiction is fact; else whence is the origin of fiction? Besides, what need we care whether it be fiction or fact, if it bring us real benefits, which we can obtain nowhere else? Though Arthur, or Ivanhoe, or Evangeline may not actually have lived, hundreds such have; and many of their characteristics may be observed even in ourselves.

With poetry thus growing out of, and supplying, the most ultimate needs of the race, no utilitarian notions can supersede it, for it contains the elements of the highest utility.

If the poet must be born and not made, then neither can he be unmade. There are, in all ages, those whom Nature has designed for kings among men, and kings they will be though robed in a peasant's garb. The poetical faculty is nature's choicest gift, it is bestowed in scanty measure; it is established in the central life of the race; it is given a peculiar work to perform; and it is not left subject to the follies and caprices of individuals. As well could the burning of a dim rush-light extinguish the sun, as could criticism dethrone this ruling principle of the mind. Before physical science can subjugate this ultimate element of the soul, it must enter nature's very Holy of Holies, whence it is forever excluded.

Could the aim of modern speculation be realized, and man be reduced into a mere material organism, sprung from some fortuitous concourse of atoms and to be again dissolved into a mixture of chemical elements; then we should need no argument to prove the non-existence of the poetical faculty. Neither a mere walking mechanism, nor any combination of chemical ingredients, however skillfully manipulated, can either create or evolve the sublime conceptions of Nature's poet.

Nothing but the man, whose physical nature is but the temple of an indwelling controlling spirit, can either conceive or express this divine conception of the soul.

Thus while the human frame is subject to trials, and the human heart to sympathies: while the sun pours effulgence on the flowers of spring, and winter bears his storm-clad crest aloft in the hills: while day and night meet in twilight, and two eternities converge in a single moment of time, while reason is finite, and nature infinite: while man is human, and God divine, the highest conceptions of the intellect, and the holiest impulses of the emotions, still remain the invincible guardians of the poetical element in man.

Germans are great smokers. The Government has come to the conclusion that the excessive smoking is so injurious as to warrant restrictive measures. So it is stated—in certain towns of Germany, therefore, the police have had orders to forbid all lads under sixteen years of age to smoke in the streets, and to punish the offence by fine and imprisonment.

Mr. Spurgeon says: "I see it publicly stated by men who call themselves Christians that it would be advisable for Christians to frequent the theatre that the character of the drama might be raised. The suggestion is about as sensible as if we were bidden to pour a bottle of lavender water into a great sewer to improve its aroma."