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## Poetry.

### The Two Debtors.

BY JOHN NEWTON.

Once a woman silent stood,  
While Jesus sat at meat;  
From her eyes pour'd a flood,  
To wash his sacred feet:  
Shame and wonder, joy and love,  
All at once possess'd her mind,  
That she e'er so vile could prove,  
Yet now forgiveness find.

"How came this vile woman here?  
Will Jesus notice such?  
Sure, if he a prophet were,  
He would disdain her touch!"  
Simon thus, with scornful heart,  
Slighted one whom Jesus lov'd;  
But her Saviour took her part,  
And thus his pride reproved:

"If two men in debt were bound,  
One less, the other more,  
Fifty or five hundred pound,  
And both alike were poor;  
Should the lender both forgive,  
When he saw them both distress'd  
Which of them would you believe  
Engag'd to love him best?"

"Surely he who most did owe,"  
The Pharisee replied;  
Then our Lord, "By judging so,  
Thou dost for her decide:  
Simon, if like her you know  
How much you forgiveness need;  
You like her had acted too,  
And welcom'd me indeed.

When the load of sin is felt,  
And much forgiveness known,  
Then the heart of course will melt,  
Tho' hard before as stone:  
Blame not then her love and tears,  
Greatly she in debt has been;  
But I have remov'd her fears,  
And pardon'd all her sin."

When I read this woman's case,  
Her love and humble zeal,  
I confess, with shame of face,  
My heart is made of steel.  
Much has been forgiv'n to me,  
Jesus paid my heavy score;  
What a creature must I be,  
That I can love no more!

## Religious.

### Trophimus at Miletus.

REV. A. M. STALKER.

From the Book of Acts it appears that Trophimus was a Gentile—a Christian convert—and much esteemed as a fellow-labourer by Paul. He intended accompanying the apostle on his last voyage to Rome, but, on the vessel reaching Miletus, was taken ill, and Paul, who had to proceed without him, acquaints Timothy with the touching fact. This record of the fact suggests thoughts respecting both the invalid and the apostle.

First, as to the invalid. Trophimus is sick! Piety does not exempt from sickness. If it did, none of Christ's friends would be ill. A peculiarity would thus be thrown round godliness at variance with the spirituality of "the Kingdom that cometh not with observation." But let physical laws be infringed, whether by believer or unbeliever, suffering ensues. No special interposition is experienced even by the Christian. The pious invalids, both of Old and New Testament times, attest this. Hence Trophimus, though pre-eminently a good man, was a sufferer. His case, moreover, proves that distinguished qualifications for usefulness are no guarantee against illness. Paul had his "thorn in the flesh"; Epaphroditus his "sickness nigh unto death"; Timothy his "often infirmities." But they were all under his loving eye who, while He presides over the armies of the Throne, disposes aright of the soldiers of the Cross. "None may ask, What doest Thou?"

"Trophimus left at Miletus" reminds how a Christian, during sickness, is occasionally separated from his friends. This was no trial to Archbishop Leighton. It is so, however, to many. Most likely it was to the invalid whom Paul is called upon to leave among comparative strangers. The parting is keenly felt

by both. But Trophimus I can see reposing on the grand old promise, "I will be with him in trouble."

It is also apparent that the Christian may materially aid the Redeemer's cause, even when laid aside by illness.

"I have left Trophimus 'sick' but not therefore, idle. The believer's sick bed often becomes an eloquent pulpit. The resignation which virtually asks, 'the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' often tells more memorably on those who witness it, than would the most powerful sermon. Perhaps the annals of Heaven will supply instances, not a few, of conversion as the result of scenes witnessed, and truths illustrated in the chamber of Christian suffering. Besides, who can tell the sweep and the influence of the invalid's prayers?—prayers poured into the 'Father's ear,' 'who seeth in secret,' and who inlays the suppliant's soul with the quiet music of the assurance, 'I have heard thy prayers—I have seen thy tears.'

It is equally evident that sickness may prepare for higher usefulness. History informs us that Trophimus, after restoration to health, bore more glorious testimony for the Master than ever before; and who can compute the amount of spiritual benefit accruing both to the church and the world from the influence of "the thorn" that kept Paul from being "exalted above measure"? Through sanctified affliction the invalid often realizes thoughts and feelings that ever after prove a kind of inspiration.

The record before us is suggestive, secondly, as to the apostle. Mark his present position! He writes in prison at Rome. He is looking into eternity. The gate of death is to him thrown back on its hinges, and he expects every moment to enter it. This is his last letter, and as we all possess letters with which we would not part on any account, we can imagine Timothy pacing this one among his choicest treasures.

How calm the writer is! "I am now ready to be offered." How great his affection! Standing though he does on the threshold of "worlds unknown," he is not self-absorbed. His eyes sparkle with joy as he names certain loved brethren, while that eye moistens with grief as he writes "Demas hath forsaken me," and a big tear rolls down his cheek as he tells Timothy "Trophimus is sick." He weeps, not for himself, but for the dear invalid at Miletus.

It is evident that even an apostle had not always the power of working miracles. "As many diseased had been cured by 'handkerchiefs and aprons carried from Paul's body,' why not apply one of these aprons to his loved brother, instead of 'leaving' him 'sick'?" The answer can be found only in the inscrutableness of Divine wisdom.

A good man's own devotedness to Christ accounts for his occasional depression. Judge of the apostle's sadness when he writes "there are many adversaries," when some of his old friends forsook him, and when, now, the illness of one of the best of them places a drag on the wheels of the Gospel chariot. Hear him say, "Would that I might put my own shoulder to the wheel, but I am in chains, and Trophimus is ill! What will become of the cause he loves and I love?" The man who is most ready to step into another world, is he who is most concerned for the glory of the Master in this world. Here the Christian finds a test of his own preparedness for Heaven.

A Christian concerned at the illness of a brother, finds relief in telling his sorrow to another. Paul cannot go to Trophimus, but he pours out his heart to Timothy's kindred soul. He lightens his own burden as he places it before Timothy's sympathetic eye, and he feels sure that the young evangelist's sympathy and prayers will be secured on behalf of their loved invalid. How precious the sweets of Christian friendship! Blessings, we say, on penny post and telegraphic wires! On receipt of Paul's letter—by whosever conveyed—how Timothy would pray for his sick brother at Miletus.

What wondrous power is in the

Gospel of Christ! If Paul, a Jew and Trophimus, a Greek, ever looked shy at each other, they ceased to do so when one in Him who had "broken down the middle wall of partition between them." For centuries they have been together where separation through sickness is unknown, and where service is uninterrupted. Their ceaseless activity is their sublime repose.

### What a Mother can do.

BY W. S. PLUMER, D. D.

In his admirable tract on parental obligation, Dr. Dabney says: "A church was rejoicing with its new pastor in an ingathering of souls, and among the converts was one whose appearance was so surprising that it filled them with wondering gratitude. The subject was a man of the world, who had lived past middle life, far from Christ and God. He was a man of inherited wealth and social position, generous and profuse, profane when irritated, a sportsman and keeper of thoroughbred horses, a frequenter of all scenes of gaiety and worldly amusements, which were not low. This man now suddenly manifested a solemn interest in divine things, was constant in God's house, and was found, before long, sitting like a contrite child at the feet of Jesus, and let it be added here, that his after life nobly attested the genuineness of the change. He lived a pure Christian, and devoted philanthropist, and died in the faith.

There was naturally in the new pastor's heart a curiosity to know how so surprising and gratifying a revolution was wrought, and, perhaps, a trace of elation as he argued with himself that this case must be purely a result of pulpit instrumentalities. So when the convert came to confer with the session, he was asked what sermons had been the special means of his awakening. It seemed hard for him at first to apprehend the drift of such a question, but at last he answered very simply that his change was not due to any sermons or recent means, but to his mother. To his mother? She had been dead so long that few remembered what manner of mother he had! She had been in her grave more than forty years. The oldest elder present had never seen her, had, in fact never heard of her. She had died in the bloom of her beauty and maturity, when he was a boy of six years. Thus the wonder grew. But he explained that she was a Christian woman, a fruit of the great ingathering of Samuel Davies in the colonial days, and she had begun to instruct her oldest born in the truth. He stated that now, if he was Christ's, it was the power of these teachings over his infant mind, and especially, of the dying scene, which was the true instrument of bringing him back, without which all other instruments would have been futile. When this young mother was about to die, she had gathered her little flock at her bedside, covering like a cluster of frightened birds before the mighty harvester, Death, had prayed for and blessed them, and as she laid her dying hand upon his brow, had charged him, her first born, to fear his mother's God, and remember her instructions. That hand had been upon his head ever since, through the long years of his worldliness; he had felt its touch in the hours of business, as well as in his hours of solitude; in the hunt as he was hieing his hounds after the fox; on the racefield as he cheered his winning horse, and it was this which at last had brought him back to God.

O mothers, mothers, pray on! Hope on. Be strong in faith, giving glory to God. "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

—Interior.

### A Blessed Covering.

BY WILLIAM LAMSON, D. D.

"And I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand."—Isa li: 16.

These are very tender and very precious words. How near they bring the Infinite One to him who by faith can appropriate them! It is Jehovah who speaks. We do not conjecture here.

In the connection He says, "I am the Lord thy God. I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand." The passage brings before me the image of a tender mother sitting beneath a burning sun, without a shadow to screen her, and spreading her loving hand to protect with its shadow the eyes of her little one, from the fierce rays that would otherwise burst upon them. So tenderly, so lovingly, does our God present Himself to the trusting soul. Fierce suns may send their burning rays, but it has a blessed protecting shadow.

Storms may gather and tempests may rage, but it is sheltered beneath the infinite hand. It is safe. Its hiding-place is secure. All through life, in sunshine and in tempest, the hand is outspread to protect it. Come what may, it has a hiding-place—a strong protection to which it can flee.

And who in this world of change does not need such a hiding-place? Other refuges may fail. The exigency may be one that earthly friendship, however strong or sincere, cannot meet. Weak, deserted, alone, the soul may be on the borders of despair, but how blessed then to feel that the paternal hand is over us, and its shadow is encompassing us. Now, fellow-traveller, these are no unmeaning words like those of a changeable mortal. It is the Lord our God who utters them. But is it not too great a promise for you or me to claim? It is not strange if it seems so. But it is unbelief that suggests the doubt. It is looking at ourselves, our littleness and our unworthiness, instead of looking to God, that makes the words seem incredible. We have not risen, we cannot rise, to a full conception of the paternal love and tenderness of our God. Rich as the assurance is, it is like Him to give it. It is only one of many just such assurances scattered through His word. We may take it, appropriate it, make it all our own. I look up at the stars of night and send my thoughts out among the vast worlds and systems with which the boundless spaces are filled, and the Creator of all these seems so great and mighty that I am but a mote in His vast universe. The thought comes, Can he care for me? But I open His Word and find the assurance, "I who make and who uphold these worlds, I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand." I am not overlooked, not lost to His eye for a moment.

Blessed assurance, blessed shelter, let us rest in it. Reader, know you what it is to feel that that sheltering hand is over you?

It is a beautifully tender figure which our Lord used when He uttered His touching lament over Jerusalem, that of a hen gathering her brood under her wings. But it seems to me the expression used by Jehovah of the shadow of His hand is even more tender and impressive.

### Hygrometers, and how to make them.

Do not let any one who sees this somewhat out-of-the-way name, imagine it is anything very dreadful. It is merely that of an instrument for measuring the moisture in the atmosphere.

Nearly every boy and girl has seen the chalet-like "weather-house," where one might suppose the clerk of the unreliable elements to reside, and which is certainly tenanted by a gay old lady, who comes out when the sun shines, and a military gentleman, who, disregarding catarrh, parades in front of the cottage whenever there is a rain-cloud in the sky. In this case the figures are held on a kind of lever sustained by catgut; this being very sensitive to moisture twists and shortens on damp days, and untwists and lengthens as the air becomes dry and light.

A simple hygrometer can be made by a piece of cat-gut and a straw. The cat-gut, twisted, is put through a hole in a dial, in which a straw is also placed.

In dry weather the catgut curls up; in damp it relaxes; and so the straw is turned either to the one side or the other. Straws do something more than "show which way the wind blows," you see.

Another simple weather-gauge may be made by stretching whip-cord or catgut over five pulleys. To the lower end of the string, a small weight is attached, and this rises and falls by the side of a graduated scale, as the moisture or dryness of the air shortens or lengthens the string.

Again, whip-cord, well-dried, may be hung against a wainscot, a small plummet affixed to it, and a line drawn at the precise spot it falls to. The plummet will be found to rise before rain, and fall when the prospect brightens.

Another device is to take a clean, unpainted strip of pine—say, twenty inches long, one wide, and a quarter of an inch thick—cut across the grain; then have a piece of cedar of the same size, but cut along the grain. Let these be glued together and set upright in a stand.

Before a rain-fall, the pores of the pine will absorb moisture, and swell until the whole forms a bow; this will gradually straighten on the approach of fine weather.

There are two forms in which a balance is used that are interesting from the natural laws that govern their motions. In one, a dry sponge that has been saturated in salt and water, is nicely balanced against a small weight at the opposite end. The sponge becomes heavier or lighter according to the presence or absence of moisture, and any variation in this respect may be noted on the gauge above, to which the index figure on a dial points.

The simplest plan of all, and as good as any, is to place in an accurate pair of scales on one side a one-pound weight; on the other, one pound of well-dried salt. This swells and grows heavier on the approach of rain; when brighter skies return, the one-pound weight asserts itself once more.—*Harper's Young People.*

### Is there a Central Sun?

It is singular, remarks Mr. R. A. Proctor in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, how strongly some errors retain their hold on men's minds. When Madler announced his belief that Alcyone, the chief star of the Pleiades is the central star of the universe, men's minds were attracted by the thought that the stellar system, like the solar system, revolves around a center. Yet astronomers knew perfectly well that the evidence on which Madler based his theory was exceedingly feeble.

Sir John Herschel also pointed out how unlikely it is, that the center of the Milky Way, if such a center there really is, can lie so far away from the mean plane of the Milky Way as the Pleiades. I have shown since, that the only piece of positive evidence advanced by Madler, the drift of the stars of the constellation Taurus in one direction,

is in reality no evidence at all, for the simple reason that a similar drift can be recognized in other regions of the stellar heavens. I believe that no astronomer of repute would now venture to maintain the theory that Alcyone is the central sun of the stellar system, while scarce any (if any) would maintain that there probably is a central sun at all. Yet I find that not only is the belief still widely spread among the general public that Alcyone is the central sun, but that this theory excites far more interest than most of the real discoveries interesting though they are, which have been made during the last half century. When I reached Indianapolis I found myself called on to decide, not whether the theory is true or not, but whether it is due to Bessel or Madler. My statement that the origin of the theory was scarcely worth considering, since the theory itself was long since exploded, was received in solemn silence, as if my words were scarcely credited.

And when I had endeavored, and I think succeeded, in showing good reason for rejecting the theory, I could still feel that most of my audience would a good deal rather have seen the theory established than overthrown. Such is the dominion which error sometimes achieves over men's minds.