



## LITERATURE.

## THE FAMILY BIBLE

How painfully pleasing the fond recollection  
Of youthful connexions and innocent joy,  
When, blessed with parental advice and affection,  
Surrounded with mercies, with peace from on high,  
I still view the chair of my sire and my mother,  
The seats of their offspring as ranged on each hand,  
And that richest of books, which excelled every other—  
That family bible that lay on the stand;  
That old-fashioned bible, the dear, blessed bible,  
The family bible, that lay on the stand.

That bible, the volume of God's inspiration,  
At morn and at evening, could yield us delight,  
And the prayer of our sire was a sweet invocation,  
For mercy by day, and for safety through night,  
Our hymns of thanksgiving with harmony swelling,  
All warm from the heart of a family band,  
Half-raised us from earth to that rapturous dwelling,  
Described in the bible that lay on the stand;  
The richest of books, which excelled every other—  
The family bible, that lay on the stand.

Ye scenes of tranquility, long have we parted;  
My hopes almost gone, and my parents no more;  
In sorrow and sadness I live broken-hearted,  
And wander unknown on a far-distant shore.  
Yet how can I doubt a Saviour's kind protection,  
Forgetful of gifts from his bountiful hand!  
Oh let me, with patience, receive his correction,  
And think of the bible that lay on the stand;  
The richest of books, which excelled every other—  
The family bible that lay on the stand.

## A TALE OF OLD ENGLAND.

## THE WEDDING DAY.

BY HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT.

THE gray, dewy light of a soft summer morning was stealing up the eastern verge of a sky so cloudless and transparent, that it could give promise only of as fine a day as ever shone over the green fields and gay hawthorne hedges of England in the olden time. The rich and liquid carol of the nightingale had not yet ceased, although day had already dawned, for so dense were the old thorn brakes on the hill side, and so massive the shadows of the great lime-trees in the valley, that the bird of night was there often heard to sing the whole day long. But now he sang not alone, for from every leafy hedge-row and young coppice the music of the black-birds and thrushes flowed out in gushes of clear melody, not unpleasantly blended with the shrill alarms of the village cocks, and the twittering of swallows under the cottage eaves.

It was in the neighbourhood of a pleasant Kentish village that all these sweet sounds were so rife on a June morning in the year 16—, that last century of the good unsophisticated times of old England. This village, like many others of that date, and some which even to this day have resisted the progress of improvement, was not built in two long straight lines on either side of a dull, dusty, treeless turnpike road; not one house in it glittered either with bright red brick or glaring white paint—it had no park, no court-house, no lyceum.

In a word, it was as unlike as possible to a modern village anywhere; but most unlike of all to a New England village. For its houses, or cottages rather, not one of which but had counted its hundred years, of hewn sand-stone, with thatched roofs all overgrown with moss, and yellow flowering stone-crop, were scattered here and there, irregularly over a wide common of short, elastic, greensward, among huge oaks that might well have witnessed the march of Cæsar's brazen legionaries.

There were little gardens, gay and common flowers, the rose, the sweet pea, and the honeysuckle, attached to every cottage; and to one, in no way distinguished from the rest, except that it was a little larger, and boasted an arched porch of curiously carved stone work, there seemed to belong nearly an acre of shrubbery laid out with taste, and tended with unusual care.

Still, had it not been for the square ivy tower of the old gray, weather-beaten church which rose hard by it, behind a screen of aged yew-trees, which almost hid its wolf-toothed, Saxon archway from the traveller on the narrow and little frequented road, there would have been nothing to mark it as the vicarage, as humble was it regarded as the abode, which indeed it was, of a gentleman and scholar.

Beyond the common and its straggling village, covering all the level ground to the foot of a bare, down-like, green hill, the highest summit of which was crowned by the ruins of an old tower of the Roman era, which had probably been dismantled during the bloody wars of the Roses, lay a wide wood and park, or chase, parts of which were still thick with almost primeval forest, which parts were opened to the sun in grassy glades and broad velvet lawns.

The manor house was not visible, either from the village, or from any point of the road, until it scaled the brow of the hill under the very shadow of the old keep, which had been erected probably to command it. If he

paused there, the wayfarer could just discern the glimpse of a gray, slated roof, and the tall stacks of curiously wrought chimneys among the thick black woods, and the quiet waters which surrounded the hall.

At about a mile's distance from the house a pair of heavy, rustic gates, flanked by a lodge or gate-house, as it was then termed, gave admission into the grounds; but even there the eye gained little access to the interior of the demesnes, so suddenly, and with so abrupt a turn did the avenue disappear amid the woodlands.

Everywhere else the chase was encircled by an old wall of brick, so old, indeed, that it had lost every shade of its natural hue, with a heavy parapet and battlement, all overrun with masses of ivy, which must have been growing there for centuries ere it could have attained such a degree of luxuriance. Other entrance there was none to the guarded precincts, except by one small postern door, which opened into the church, and was flanked on the right hand, as you looked northward to the hill, by the dark woods of what was called the home-park.

Early was the hour, even for those industrious and mutinous days, when the very magnates of the land were not too luxurious to rise nearly with the sun, the village was astir. Almost before it was light the old sexton had been seen halting across the green towards the church-yard gate, followed by the half-dozen handsome, athletic youths who were known through all the country round as the bell-ringers of Melcombe Regis.

And ere the first rays of the sun had tinged the few fleecy clouds, which floated motionless in the still atmosphere, with gold and amber, the quick and merry chiming of a festive peal had aroused the heaviest of the village sleepers from their protracted slumbers.

When the light streamed down long and level through the gap in the eastern hill top, and changed the panes of the cottage lattices into so many glittering diamonds, the villagers might be seen collecting in little groups, some in the gardens or under the rustic porches of their humble homes, and others on the green under the fine old oaks, all in their best attire. Clearly it was a festive day—a day of joy to many.

Yet such, alas! is the very nature of human happiness, that what brings bliss to one, and the crowning of hopes, and the full fruition of fond promise, is often fraught to another with grief, with despair, with heart-break.

Such is—such, despite all the theories of dreamers and Utopians, must be while the round world endures, and the law of Him who made it the constitution, the condition of humanity. And of this was that joyous morn, that day of thoughtless, inconsiderate mirth to the many, a great and notable example.

While the merry bells were yet ringing "in the gray, square turret swinging," in anticipation as it seemed, of some glad event, a light and hesitating hand, was laid from within, on the latch of the postern door, giving egress from the park into the churchyard, and after a moment the wicket was cautiously opened, and a fair face, half concealed by a hood of sea-green silk, peered forth as if to see that there were no spies at hand to comment on its forthcoming.

It was a very fair face, of the finest Grecian model, with large, soft, azure eyes, and a profusion of rich, light brown hair, tinged with that sunny hue which the poetic ancients were wont to call golden. But the fair face was now deadly pale, and the large, soft blue eyes were dim and suffused, and their lids heavy, as though they had been weeping; and the whole frame of the tall and delicate girl, who, seeing herself unobserved, came with a quick, light step forth from the postern gate, trembled visibly, either with present fear or with the remains of past emotion. Hurriedly, and looking oft behind and around her with a timid eye, she took her way through the long rank grass which dragged more than the hem of her white kirtle, and among the low ridges which covered the nameless graves of the poor, until she reached the narrow path which led from the door of the little vestry to the low wicket gate of the vicarage garden.

Into this, looking once more around her to see if she was observed, the young girl turned quickly, and in another moment was lost to sight among the lilac bushes, and behind the trim holly hedges of the vicar's shrubbery.

Early as was the hour, there was a lamp burning in the room on the ground floor, and its faint yellow light, dimmed a little already by the increasing brightness of the morning, fell in long lines upon the turf from a glass door, in those days an unusual luxury, which gave access to the apartment which she well knew to be occupied by the early student. At her light, hesitating tap it was opened almost immediately by a tall, thin old man, wearing the bands and cassock of a priest of the Church of England, with a countenance of singular power and depth, mixed with the utmost benevolence of expression.

A shrewd observer of human nature would have decided at once that the owner of that countenance must, in early life, have been a man of violent passion and most energetic will and would perhaps have added that the mastery, which he had now acquired over them, had been gained only through suffering and sorrow. Now, however, all the expression of that fine, pale face was bland and natural benevolence, though as his eyes fell upon the person of his youthful visitor, it instantly assumed a character of anxiety and astonishment, that was, in truth, almost painful. "Evelyn!" he exclaimed, in tones that expressed all he felt—"is it possible!—at this hour!—Come in, my poor child, I was thinking of thee, even now. Come in, dear Evelyn."

And with the words he hurried her into the little study, surrounded on all sides with book-shelves, and seated her in his own easy chair beside the table, on which stood the lamp by whose light he had been reading. But no tones of grave theology, no flowers of classic literature had been his study; for on the board were scattered only a number of old letters, the paper all yellow and marble with age, and the ink of the beautiful feminine Italian writing changed to coppery hue. But among them lay a miniature of ivory, of a young, fair-haired face of extraordinary loveliness, in which it would have been a dull

eye, indeed that could not trace lines of resemblance, not to be mistaken to the vicar's early visitor. Her eyes fell upon them, and recognized the face at once, in spite of the attempt which the old man made to conceal the picture among the papers.

"Ah!" she said, with a sigh and a wan smile, "you were indeed thinking of me, dear Mr. Mertoun. Do not put it aside—nay, do not, I beseech you!" and laying her hand on his arm, she took the miniature from between his fingers and gazed at it in silence for some minutes.—At length she returned it to the old man, and fixing her soft eyes full on his face, she said in a low but firm voice, "She was very unhappy."

"She was, my daughter," replied the clergyman in tones which showed much more agitation on his part than on that of the first speaker—"she was, but God's mercy and her own consciousness of duty painfully performed, enabled her to endure her sorrows patiently, it not cheerfully; and she was blest in this at least, the cause of much happiness to others." The girl's face lightened at first, and her whole countenance was full of earnest attention; but ere he had ceased speaking, it was evident that her thoughts were engrossed by one dominant idea, and that his latter words were spoken to ears that neither heard nor heeded them. As he ended, however, she again looked up quickly in his face and said—"Duty!—duty!—are you sure that *was* duty?" "She thought so, at least, Evelyn; and she was as wise as she was good and gentle."

"I do not know," answered the girl, with a strong emphasis. "Duty to make herself and another beside herself, miserable for a lifetime, do not my eyes look on the misery even now which that duty, as you call it, created? Duty to give herself to one man, when her heart was full of love for another—duty to swear before the altar?"

"Daughter," the old man interrupted her, solemnly, "she swore to nothing which she did not resolve to do— which, by the aid of the most High, she did not succeed in doing. If that self-sacrifice, in this world, be duty, then was it duty to which she devoted."

"Two victims!" the girl interrupted him. "Herself, perhaps, she was justified in devoting; another she had no right to condemn to life-long anguish." "Evelyn!—Evelyn!—I grieve to see you thus; I had hoped you were resigned—contented. Tell me, what means this passion, this strange visit, so untimely, on your wedding morning?"

"Ay!" she exclaimed, putting her hands up to her forehead and parting the rich curls of her hair which had fallen forward a little over her eyes. "Ay! that is it, my wedding morning! but I have no time to lose, father, not a moment—it may be they have missed me already. I stole away while the girls were in the gardens gathering my bridal wreath; for they have guarded me of late that I should not consult with you."

"My child!—my poor child! it is too late for consultation, replied the priest, sorrowfully. Nothing is left to thee but to do thy duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call thee." "Never!" she answered, resolutely. "Never! I may die, but I never will be the wife of Andrew Mildmay!" "Why did you then consent, Evelyn? and whence this late repugnance?"

"They have deceived me—lied to me! I consented; and what consent is that wrung from a helpless girl by persecution such as I have suffered? It is that they swore to me Henry Fitzosborn was no longer of the living."

The old man started, vehemently moved. "And is he," he exclaimed, "is he of the living?" "At least," she answered, mastering apparently some emotion by an effort, "he is not of the dead. They had no tidings of his death when they swore to me that they knew him dead."

"Alas! my poor child—my sweet Evelyn, you but deceive yourself. There is no hope—his ship is lost beyond all question, upon the savage coast of Barbary, whither even to escape is to perish—no soul was saved of all its gallant crew. There is no hope! They have not deceived you." "There are no tidings, it may be, that a soul was saved—but this I know, that there are none that all were lost, and he, above all as they swore to me."

"Is it your last stay, my Evelyn? Alas, it is a fatal one. And they, I fear, who told you thus, are no true friends to you." "The truest, since they have saved me from the guilt of perjury. Who shall save those who swore that they knew him dead?"

"It was a pious fraud, my daughter. There was no doubt, not a shadow of it, that he perished with the rest; and that, they were well assured of, who swore as they did, hoping so to spare you years of that hope deferred which maketh the soul sick unto death. You must be patient, Evelyn." "Patient!—I have been patient till patience hath become a crime, and rebellion virtue and piety. Is this your piety—yours, Norman Mertoun?—have you grown so much into the fashion of the time?—have you so far contracted the doctrines of our court and king, that you can lend your sanction to such juggling? A pious fraud! Heaven save the mark. I shall hear you preach next, I suppose, on mental reservation, and no faith to be kept with unbelievers."

The thin, pale cheek of the old man flushed fiery red at her reproach, and he replied, sorrowfully—

"You do me wrong—you do me great wrong, Evelyn."

"Say, rather, you do yourself great wrong, Mr. Mertoun. But hear me, I have but ten words to say, and scarcely time to say them. You know all that has befallen me from my cradle—you know, no one so well as you, all that my mother, my sweet sainted mother suffered—you know, Mr. Mertoun, all that you suffer now, for love of that angel, whom the tyranny of others, and her own misimagined sense of duty, severed from you while on earth. Shall you be joined in Heaven? Man cannot answer that; and if he could, it is a weary time to wait, for who loathes earth and pants to die as others pray to live? You know—for in your hearing was it uttered—that her last entreaty was that her Evelyn, unhappy I, never should be compelled or solicited to wed a man whom I loved not. You know—for in your presence was it signed—that not she only, but my father also, were consenting to my betrothal with Henry Fitzosborns.—Knowing all this—knowing that the tidings of his death are a false pretext for hurrying on this hateful union—