

Poetry.

A BYGONE YEAR.

"For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord.—JER. xxx, 21.

A year, another year, is fled,
Its issues who can tell?
Millions of voices of the dead,
Reply from heaven or hell.

All these were living at the birth,
Of the departed year;
They all have vanished from the earth,
We fill their places here.

Thought to the eye, the ear, the mind
Of man their speech is seal'd,
The eternal meeting each may find
In two plain words revealed.

Lost spirits, from the dark abyss,
Cry mournfully "Beware!"
Spirits in glory, and in bliss,
Sing joyfully "Prepare!"

Thus timely warn'd, and moved with fear,
Of wrath let us beware;
For life or death, in this new year,
For earth and heaven prepare.

Who then of those with us this day,
In childhood, youth, or age,
"To love the Lord our God can say,
"We all our hearts engage?"

—Montgomery.

Select Tale.

THRILLING ADVENTURE
IN INDIA.

During a residence of some months at a station on the Malabar coast of Hindostan, I frequently went into the forest alone, for the purpose of amusing myself by the great variety of game, but seldom ventured so far as to prevent my returning before night. Attended by a native, I one day proposed ascending a mountain, whose blue summit could scarcely be distinguished from the town, rising afar in the wilderness above the lesser heights of the great Cant range. We started at daybreak, and plunged directly into the forest, in a direction toward the object of our expedition. I carried a heavy rifle, and wore a brace of pistols and a long hunting-knife in my girdle. My companion wore nothing but a pair of unshapely shoes, made of untanned leather, and a garment of leopard skin which descended to the knees, was fastened at the waist by a belt, in which was placed a heavy knife, with a curved blade, which I observed was very sharp and bright; he carried no other weapon, except a short fowling piece, loaded with ball. He was an athletic and bold-looking fellow, acquainted with all the methods of hunting and combatting all of the fierce prowlers of the wilds, and possessed of an uncommon degree of sagacity, coolness, and physical strength. These were the qualities I desired, for I had been informed that the mountain we had been in quest of was considered by the natives as a dangerous place, even for the most skillful and daring hunter, being full of rocky caves inaccessible to any thing but the beasts to whom they afforded shelter; and the country in its vicinity being covered with dense forests and dark tangled jungles, into which the foot of man had never ventured.

As we approached the mountain our progress indeed became more and more difficult. Thick bushes and fallen timber frequently obstructed our way. Nearly every appearance of game ceased here.—The smallest animals had fled their region, or had fallen a prey to the more lordly species of the brute creation. Occasionally we heard the crashing of the boughs, and caught a glimpse of some moving object in the dark recesses of the thickets, or saw the spotted folds of the cobra di capella, and other fearful snakes, glide away and disappear among the leaves and thick brush, as though startled at our approach. But thus far we had proceeded so cautiously as not to disturb these dangerous creatures, or attract their attention. My companion would frequently pause in a listening attitude, and cast his piercing glance into the tree tops which met above us and completely shut out the light of day, as though he expected to see the crouching tiger or the anaconda, ready to dart upon us; and yet there was no expression of fear on the fellow's countenance—it was the caution of the true hunter.

We had accomplished nearly one-half of the ascent, when we were stopped by a wall of rock, perpendicular in many places to the height of several hundred feet, and running across the face of the mountain, to the right and left, until the eye lost its curve on either side. Seeing no way of

passing over, under, or through the obstacle, I directed the native to follow the ledge a short distance toward the left, in order to find an opening, while I took the right. I proceeded some distance and found a break in the rock through which I thought we might make our way to the top. Trees had grown up in this opening, and bushes had sprung from every crevice along its sides, filling it up so completely that only an occasional glimpse could be had of the sky through the top, which appeared no wider than one's hand.

While contemplating this singular arrangement, the native made his appearance, and after attentively considering the opening, said he could make the ascent. At this moment a sudden current of air, bursting through the crevice, parted the bushes and disclosed to us, a little beyond, a spot where the great rock seemed no longer entire. We had proceeded along this passage, which was nearly blocked up by the trees and brush, until we reached this point, and were convinced at once the ascent would not be difficult. The crevice widened here, and it struck me in particular that it seemed no longer a rent, but a natural opening, which grew gradually wider as it ran farther into the mountain, and the sides of which were composed of earth and rock of various dimensions, some projecting nearly or quite across the fissure. The side which we proposed to ascend was not quite perpendicular at this spot, and its broken appearance and the shrubs growing from it, made our success apparently feasible.

Impelled by curiosity and a desire to know more of this singular opening, I determined to penetrate farther into it, while my companion tried the ascent. I proceeded some distance, and noticed that the passage seemed to grow no wider; but the vegetation became thinner at every step, and at length ceased almost entirely. Here, on looking up, I saw that the crevice was closed some fifty feet above, and before me was darkness, in which I dared not penetrate. While looking with a sort of horror into this dark chasm which seemed to lead directly toward the heart of the mountain, I heard a rustling sound proceeding from its recesses, and started back appalled at the thought of having entered, perhaps the very den of the fierce tiger or the dread lion. The noise was repeated, and hastily turning, I retraced my steps as silently and as rapidly as possible. I cast my eyes up among the rocks to discover my companion, but found that I had passed the spot where he had commenced climbing, and as I turned again to go back, I saw through the bushes an enormous serpent glide slowly toward me, along that part of the passage I had traversed. He did not seem to be aware of the presence of any foe or victim, but crept along with his body half concealed among the bushes, and his head close to the ground, until arriving under the native, and probably alarmed at some noise the latter made, he then reared himself several feet from the ground, and beholding the man above him, gave a loud and terrible hiss, and quick as lightning coiled himself around the nearest tree, and ascended to its first boughs. The sight paralyzed every mental and physical faculty I possessed. I had no life but in the horror of gazing upon this frightful monster—horror which was greatly increased by the peril in which it placed my companion. He meanwhile heard the terrible hissing below him, and became fully aware of the extent of his danger. He had climbed forty or fifty feet, and was very nearly as high as the top of the tree which the serpent was ascending in pursuit of him.

For ten or fifteen feet above where he now stood, the rock was perpendicular, and afforded no facilities for climbing, except its crevices and the bushes that grew from them. Up he went, however, with incredible agility, until within a few feet of a spot where the wall seemed to jut back, forming a sort of shelf; here nothing seemed within his reach by which he might raise himself higher, and for a moment he paused. Above him, and quite out of his reach, was a decayed root, which did not look strong enough to sustain his weight, and above that was a strong bush which, if he could but grasp, he felt certain of being able to reach the shelf, where he would have some chance of defending himself, and he observed the top of the great opening was not far above this, although a closer examination would have shown him that it was impossible to reach it from his present position, for the wall above the shelf and on either side, presented a solid smooth front, without shrub or crevice. He had but an instant to consider. He heard a quiet rustling in the tree below, a branch of which ran very near him, and again that sharp hiss told him that his frightful enemy was almost in reach of him.—With the energy that desperation gives in such a moment, he made a spring up the perpendicular face of the rock. If he missed his aim, or the root broke, unless he could seize the bush above it he was lost, for he would inevitably fall, and the serpent would seize him as soon as within his reach.

The root did break almost an instant after his weight was upon it, but the agile native had managed to lay his hand on the bush, and after another powerful effort he was upon the shelf. Seeing it was impossible to climb farther, he turned, and setting his back firmly against the rock, drew his knife and fixed his eyes upon his enemy.

I saw the latter wind himself around one of the strongest of the high limbs, which would bring him very near his victim, and then by self-possession returned. In fact, what I have related had passed so rapidly before my eyes that I scarcely had time for action of any sort. The serpent had ascended the tree so swiftly until concealed by its branches that I had no time to fire, but now that he had exposed himself, I determined to do so, although the shot might endanger the native. The frightful monster, in his revolutions around the limb, paused whenever his head came above it, and fixing his burning eyes upon his expected prey, made another turn around the limb, and each time came nearer to its extremity. As his head came fairly in view I fired, aiming at his neck. The report of the rifle in this post-up place was tremendous, and instantly turning his head toward the tree, the serpent twisted himself in a hard knot upon the limb. I distinctly heard his blood dropping on the leaves near my feet. I thought I had done the business for him, but was mistaken, for in a moment, hissing in anger, he uncoiled himself and again advanced along the branch.

My companion had left his fowling-piece near where I stood, and I seized it and fired a second time, but without effect. He reached the end of the limb, which, though running horizontally, was a continuance of the main body of the tree, and having been broken near the shelf, was strong enough to bear his weight and bend very little—Here with his head flattened and his arched and swollen crest glowing like fire, he now prepared to spring upon his prize. The blood streamed from the wound in his neck, and flowing down crimsoned the bright scales, but he seemed to be but little injured. His burning and dilating eyes were fixed upon the native, and his red forked tongue darted like an incessant flame from his mouth. The man was prepared for him—the keen knife glittered in his hand—but his situation was a terrible one.

At this moment a dark shadow fell upon him.—He looked up and in amazement, beheld a lion of great size standing upon the brink of the opening, some ten feet above him, with his eyes fixed on the other side, and evidently intending to cross. A hiss from below caught his ear, and dropping his head quickly between his legs, he lifted his mane, and with a loud roar sprang fiercely at the native, who avoided him by shrinking close to the rock, and as he came within reach on the shelf, he plunged the knife into his side. As the lion recovered his leap and turned upon his foe, I saw two or three coils fly from the limb like rings of fire, and in an instant one of them was around the shaggy neck of the lordly beast, and the fangs of the serpent were fastened just above his eyes. He was dragged struggling from the shelf, and the serpent retaining his hold upon the limb, they swung heavily against the body of the tree. The joints of the serpent stretched to their utmost tension, and the limb bent and cracked with the weight it sustained, but he firmly kept hold, and drew the cord about the neck of the struggling lion as a hang man's knot. But the mighty beast was not thus to be overcome. With one of his strong paws he grasped the snake above the head, and turning seized that part in his mouth, crushing bones and flesh, and grinding his teeth in fury when they met. The cords upon the limbs now relaxed, and they fell heavily upon the ground, fighting in a heap, and whirling the dry leaves up in a cloud with their fiery energy.

I ran up the path which the native had selected before, and was soon joined by him. With little difficulty we reached the top of the opening, and turned to look at the strange battle below. But it was over. The huge serpent lay moody and motionless at the foot of the tree, and the victorious lion disappeared among the bushes in the direction of the fissure. He had received some severe wounds, and I doubt not his bones ached from the great stress of the serpent's folds. Our attempted ascent of the mountain ended for that day, and we quickly wended our way homeward.

SHORT-SIGHTED GENERALS.—In the military *coup d'ail* a perfect physical vision is not essential.—Alexander the Great, Gustavus Adolphus, Frederick the Second, and Napoleon, were short-sighted. Darnoutier was nearly blind when he was last employed. Davoust, who at the battle of Austerlitz, beat an army nearly double his own size, could neither see the enemy nor the position they held; and Zisca, the Hussite General, exalted by Mosheim gained his most celebrated victories at Kampsitz and Ausig, when totally blind.—*Athenaeum*.

Miscellaneous.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL ON MORAL AND POLITICAL PROGRESS.

On Tuesday night Exeter Hall was crowded to excess in consequence of an announcement that the first one of a course of winter lectures, organized by the Young Men's Christian Association, would be delivered by the Right Hon. Lord John Russell, M. P. The subject of the lecture was, "The obstacles which have retarded moral and political progress."

At eight o'clock, the Earl of Shaftesbury, president of the Association, entered the Hall, followed by Lord J. Russell, Lord Painsure, the Right Hon. V. Smith, M. P., Mr. Beaumont, M. P., the Rev. R. Bickersteth, the Rev. M. Villers, the Rev. Dr. Hamilton, and other clerical and lay members of the Association. After the cheers which greeted the arrival of the distinguished party upon the platform had subsided, the Earl of Shaftesbury took the chair. Payer was offered up by the Rev. R. Bickersteth.

The noble chairman then said:—Ladies and gentlemen,—On all occasions of this kind the opening remarks of the chairman ought to be exceedingly short, but on this occasion they ought to be shorter than usual, because the proverb, that "good wine needs no bush," is singularly applicable in the present instance. The noble lord who has so kindly undertaken to open this course of lectures needs no praise of mine nor any introduction to you. His own great reputation is more than sufficient. I will, therefore, at once request our noble friend to open the business of this meeting by the lecture that he has been so good as to promise us. [Cheers.]

Lord J. Russell then presented himself to the meeting, and was received with loud and prolonged cheering from the vast audience. The noble lord said:—My noble friend has said most truly that I have undertaken the task of delivering the opening lecture of this association. I confess that since I have undertaken it, although I feel deeply the honour that was offered me, I felt appalled at that undertaking. Although certainly, I cannot say that I am "unused to public speaking"—[a laugh]—yet an address of this kind is to me unusual, and I fear that I shall not perform the task in a manner adequate to its importance. I must say likewise, that the subject which I have chosen, and which appeared to me one upon which I had given a good deal of thought and attention, when I came further to consider it, it seemed so vast, that I can only open a corner of that theme; I can but make a beginning; and, therefore, what I have to deliver may seem to you in many parts to be proving that which has been abundantly and frequently proved, to be enforcing that which needs no further enforcing, and to be wasting time in discussing the value of that which has been long since ascertained or appreciated. Yet, I think you will not find it unuseful to throw somewhat of the light of past history upon the future, and we may find some guide to that future in looking back to the errors that have been committed, not by barbarous nations—not in the dark ages—but by some of the greatest and most enlightened among mankind. I have undertaken to point out some, at least, of the obstacles which retard moral and political progress. The latest lecture given in the course of 1854 was on "Opposition to great inventions and discoveries." Nor was a student material wanting to such a theme. Roger Bacon, Copernicus, Galileo, and at a latter time, Harvey, and even Newton, afforded pregnant instances of resistance to the diffusion of light. But if the obstacles to the progress of physical science are great how much greater are those which impede moral and political advancement! Mathematical demonstration and physical experiment carry with them a certain irresistible force which pierces through the thickest barriers of prejudice and superstition. When Galileo showed through his telescope the satellites of Jupiter, it was difficult for the most obstinate pedant to deny the truth of his discovery. When Newton demonstrated, by a series of geometrical propositions, the doctrine of attraction, those who understood his reasoning could not long withhold their assent to his reasoning—could not long withhold their assent to his conclusions. But in respect to moral and political truth, we have not, in the first place, the same certainty, and, in the second place, we have to contend against more than the pride of intellect, the tenacity of prejudice, and the force of habit; we have to contend against the jealousy of power, the empire of superstition, and the alarms of timidity. Not to argue this matter further, I will at once show you by an example what I mean. The best commentary on Newton's "Principia" is written by Jacquier and Le Sueur, two members of the Society of Jesus. This commentary is so simple and complete that it enables a person who has