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"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

The undiscovered Country.

Could we but know
The land that ends our dark uncertain travel,
Where lie those happier hills and meadows low;
Ah! if beyond the spirit's inmost cavil
Aught of that country could we surely know
Who would not go?

Might we but hear
The hovering angels' high imagined chorus,
Or catch, betimes, with wakeful eyes and clear,
One radiant vista of the realm before us,
With one wrapt moment given to see and hear
Ah! who would fear?

Were we quite sure
To find the peerless friend that left us lonely,
Or there, by some celestial stream as pure,
To gaze in eyes that here were lovelit only—
This weary, mortal coil,—were we quite sure,
Who would endure?

Round Table, May 5.

The Answer.

"Who would not go?"
With buoyant steps, to gain that blessed portal
Which opens to the land we long to know?
Where shall be satisfied the souls immortal,
And strains of heavenly music faintly hear,
Breathing good cheer?

"Who would endure?"
To walk in doubt and darkness with misgiving,
When he whose tender promises are sure,
The Crucified, the Lord, the Ever-living,
Keeps us those "mansions" evermore secure,
By waters pure?

Oh, wondrous land!
Fairer than all our spirit's fairest dreaming;
"Eye hath not seen," no heart can understand
The things prepared, the cloudless radiance
streaming,
How longingly we wait our Lord's command,
His opening hand!

O dear ones there,
Whose voices hushed, have left our pathway
lonely,
We come, ere long, your blessed hope to share;
We take the guiding hand, we trust it only,
Seeing, by faith, beyond this clouded air,
That land so fair!

Round Table, May 26.

Religious.

The Modern Day of Atonement.

BY REV. S. F. SMITH, D. D.

The bloody sacrifices and the scape-goat pertaining to the great Day of Atonement of the ancient Jews no longer mark the celebration of the day. The gorgeous temple at Jerusalem no more invites worshipper to perform his solemn rites in the place where Jehovah had set His name to dwell. The occasion, however, is too important to be lost sight of in any age. The day when the sins of the whole preceding year come up into the Divine remembrance and must be atoned for and forgiven, or their crushing weight be borne by the sinner, is of too great moment to be allowed to pass unregarded. The tenth day of the seventh month, that is, the tenth day after the appearance of the new moon in September,—the present year falling on Wednesday the 19th,—was accordingly recognized as the Day of Atonement, a Sabbath by faithful Israelites throughout the world.

The day is one of deep solemnity and anxiety to every Jewish worshipper. On that day, the Jew is taught to believe, God looks into the heart of every man, reviews his actions and motives during the preceding year, and allots the penalties due to his sins. But he also believes that by deep humiliation, sincere penitence and earnest prayer the Divine favor may be invoked and forgiveness obtained up to that day. The Jew believes that God withholds forgiveness from him for all the wrongs done to his fellow man, until the latter has absolved him. And accordingly he redresses all wrongs for which his conscience condemns him, endeavors to restore harmony among all who have been estranged, and cultivates, at least for the time, feelings of universal charity and good-will. In the absence of the blood of bullock and ram, he seeks in connection with these efforts and by

the penances by which they are accompanied, to atone for his sins by repentance and his iniquities by turning to the paths of rectitude.

The Day of Atonement is observed as a rigid fast. No labour is performed on that day, and no food or drink passes the lips of the devout Israelite. Many observe the day with such strictness that they do not even comb their hair, nor perform their usual ablutions. They also dress themselves in white garments, as the body is clad after death, thus signifying that they cast aside all secular thoughts and offer themselves entirely to God. The most zealous devote the ten preceding days of the month to penitential fastings and prayers. The service begins with a prayer of consecration called *Kol Nidre*, which is chanted in unison by the whole congregation. Hymns, private confessions and prayers occupy much of the night, often till far into the morning. Inasmuch as the Jewish day is from sunset to sunset, these ceremonies begin on the night preceding the Day of Atonement.

Before leaving their houses in the morning to repair to the synagogue, the Jews light a wax taper sufficiently large to burn twenty-four hours, which must on no account be extinguished. Early in the morning on the Day of Atonement the services are recommenced in the synagogue and continued throughout the day. In commemoration of the practice of the ancient high priest, who entered the holy of holies on this sole day of the entire year to commune with God and to confess the sins of the people, the Jews at noon recite the *Musaph* (lamentation), and the whole congregation kneel three times towards the sacred crypt which contains the roll of the law.

At the coming of twilight a committee of three go out from the synagogue to ascertain if three stars are visible. This is announced by the blowing of a horn (*Shophar*—to adorn, garnish.) The blast is a message of peace, announcing that the clouds of the Divine wrath have passed away, that light shines gently down upon them from heaven, and that God is pacified towards them. The congregation then return to their homes with gladness, and resume their customary employments.

With a pleasurable and yet painful curiosity we attend these ceremonies of our Jewish fellow-citizens;—pleasurable, for it is always a pleasure to gratify an innocent love of knowledge;—painful, for a Christian soul is pained to witness the "vail that is upon their hearts, when Moses is read in their synagogues every Sabbath day." They are in the midst of light, but they dwell in the darkness. Messiah has come "to take away the first that He may establish the second." But they cleave to the types, regardless of the Antitype. Wedded to the foreshadowing they disregard the substance foreshadowed. Admiring the splendid past, they are insensible to the greater splendor of the future. And even Christendom, with some few exceptions, seems to have laid aside the prayer of our earlier saints—"Bring in the Jews with the fulness of the Gentiles."

But though the altar is broken down, and the priest has finished his ministering and departed, we believe the Divine promise in which the Jews are embraced as well as the Gentiles. The magnificent argument of the apostle in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans,—one of the richest, keenest, closest, tersest and most satisfactory arguments recorded in ancient literature,—presents the case fully and pertinently. It is an argument not to be trifled with, and its conclusions cannot be called in question.

Union of small Churches.

[The best mode of working smaller churches is so important a subject, that no apology can be needed for recording facts in relation to it. For the following sketch we are indebted to the Rev. R. Morris, of Clifton. It will be read with interest.]—London Freeman.

The Mendip is a fine range of hills, whose spurs form rich and beautiful combs that run down into broad and fertile valleys. Nearly all the eminences command an extensive view of the Bristol Channel with the Welsh coast, and the Welsh mountains looming in the horizon. One valley is overlooked by Barley Wood, so long the residence of Hannah More. Its present occupant keeps this beautiful home in careful preservation, and a visit to Barley

Wood is still a cherished purpose of the traveller passing through Somersetshire. The other extensive vale holds fine old Glastonbury and Wells within its rich enclosure. Here the temptation is strong to tell of their attractions, but we wish to describe the labours of a few unauthorized servants of the Lord, who although neither abbots nor monks of Glastonbury, nor deans of Bath and Wells, have been blessed in a work for which neither Wells nor Glastonbury cared. The peasantry of this beautiful neighbourhood had been for centuries cruelly neglected. They had sunk to the lowest level. Their vicinity to rich ecclesiastical corporations, and residence amidst the richness and attractions of one of nature's best provinces, seemed the occasion of their greater neglect and deeper degradation. Hannah More made noble efforts to redeem them. She personally for years worked and induced others to labour for their good. She passed away, and amidst the excitement of clerical dissension and Church pretension, the population remained comparatively uncared for.

Cheddar is situated at the mouth of that terrific valley, riven in the rocks which is now forgotten in the name of its walls—*Cheddar Cliffs*. In this village a good Baptist has dwelt for many years. He laboured as duties would allow to win the hearts of those around him to Christ. He became the centre of an influence that gradually widened. His own son stirred up his companions at Bristol to help, and early on Saturday morning, sometimes before day-break, two or three earnest warm-hearted youthful Christians could be seen climbing Bedminster Down and the distant uplands with their faces towards the Mendips, and the village Zion, twenty miles distant, where for the day they would spend their Sabbath. Here they taught and preached. This service continued for years, and with many tokens of the Divine blessing. In a cottage they worked and taught, and the day of rest to them became one of joyful and honourable toil. The station was zealously supported by the early friends of the Baptist Itinerant Society. A little chapel was built in the year 1831. It has been three times enlarged. In 1832 a church of eleven members was formed. There were present the Rev. Thomas Winter, and Caleb Birt, of Bristol, and T. Clark, of Paulton. The year 1834 was the beginning of the special success that God had in store for this little Zion. Mr. William Clark, the son, till now resident in Bristol, settled at Cheddar. He threw all his wonted energy into the cause. Many caught the same spirit, and from that time the village station has multiplied, till a truly primitive diocese is under the watchful care of our honoured brethren. A record of the help and aids that unexpectedly cheered our devoted friends, would be an interesting chapter in Church history, but these must be left, with a simple acknowledgment of their number and value. God continually worked with them until they felt prepared to invite a settled minister. In 1840, the Rev. C. Webb, from Uley, in Gloucestershire, accepted the call, and for seven years, as a wise master-builder he reviewed the foundations, and on them, through Divine help, continued to rear a superstructure befitting the labours of faith and love that had gone before. His ministry was eminently successful. By this time the Gospel had been introduced into most of the villages around, signal cases of conversion had occurred, and village chapels had been built. Mr. Webb was succeeded by three brethren, who took up his work in his own spirit. These were Mr. Chew, a Bristol student, Mr. Price, and the Rev. Thomas Davies, the present pastor. The result of these labours is that the district is better supplied with the means of grace than probably any such district in the kingdom. There are altogether about ten or eleven village chapels, freehold and free from debt; no less than 300 members on the books of these various village churches; and thriving Sunday-schools dispersed through the whole neighbourhood, with efficient bands of teachers. It must not be forgotten that such congregations are constantly suffering from the necessary removal of their most useful members. The young move to the neighbouring cities, the middle-aged form the emigrating class, and this Cheddar diocese has endured its share of difficulty from the ceaseless change among the people. Amidst all, the church

thrives, and is now seeking, in an awakened spirit, to extend its borders. There are points of deep interest about this record that demand more than a passing notice. The minister is the pastor of all. These village churches are independent in action, in matters touching the admission and exclusion of members, but, in the main, are united and one with their sister churches. These churches appear to be one as to the selection and support of the ministry, but each is independent as to some matters, mutually agreed upon. The subjects of common rule are under the control of a kind of presbytery, consisting of the pastor, the brethren who preach, and two messengers from each place. The minister always presides; the meetings are held quarterly; the afternoon is devoted to business, and the evening to devotional exercises and exhortation. The present pastor, the Rev. Thomas Davies, bears high testimony to the great efficiency of these arrangements, and as they were no doubt made at the call of necessity, they have proved a source of strength. It will be observed that practically the congregational principle is somewhat modified by a presbyterial element, and this would suggest an inquiry of importance to our churches. The quarterly meeting is regarded as a court of appeal. This alone would give life to its session, and the business meetings are well attended. All applications to labour as Evangelists are here determined. Here also it is resolved, where and when anniversaries should be held and collections made; also what new stations occupied. It would seem that the jurisdiction of the church and the quarterly meeting have been practically determined without difficulty, and the Christian spirit ruling has prevented any schism on the question of usurped authority. Whether some such arrangements could not be made to extend the kingdom of God, in many districts is of the very deepest interest. Here a number of village churches that in other cases would have three or four badly supported pastors, by union, adequately sustain one and secure prosperity. Indeed, three of the associated churches had formerly pastors dependent upon them for support, but since their union their prosperity has increased. These churches have not only been nurseries for the city churches, but, in a qualified sense, a school of the prophets. Some able ministers of Christ, now in Australia and the United States, were trained here, and many occupying most important spheres of usefulness at home began their work among the Cheddar churches. The simplicity of aim and energy of purpose that have all along by the Divine blessing kept alive this work, continue with the men who leave it. They occupy other fields, but in the same ardent, almost enthusiastic, spirit. This is easily understood by those who visit the stations. Universal testimony affirms that the Baptist denomination has not a rural population better cared for than this. The beginning of the work was very simple, but equally instructive. Mr. W. Clark, sen., was a scholar in a school established in the village by Mrs. Hannah More. He passed from this teaching to the school of Christ, and there learned the priceless value of the Gospel. This awakened intense anxiety as to the spiritual condition of his neighbours, and for many years he struggled hard, amidst bitter opposition, to bring the villagers to Christ. Many were led to the cross, and a spring time of blessing was enjoyed. When his son from Bristol joined him, new life everywhere was seen. From this event date the chief occurrences we have referred to. Hannah's More's school, the village scholar, and the city youth, are the appointed instruments of a Pentecostal blessing, that in grandeur and beauty neither riven cliffs nor spreading valleys could surpass. Although the early agents in this work have been compelled to retire from more active service, others have appeared, and the boundless resources of Divine grace are seen in that it still progresses.

The work we have imperfectly sketched will bear a closer inspection. One honoured brother, now an active secretary of a county association (Mr. Webb, of Tiverton), was pastor of this congeries of churches for many years. A detailed account of the gradual progress of this successful mission would be deeply interesting. It might suggest plans