

Poetry.

For the Religious Intelligencer.

A FRAGMENT.

AT DUSKNESS.

The vapor bells have tolled their mournful chime,
Another day has fled from Earth and Time;
The Sun, with Glories radiated o'er,
Now fades in slumber in your gorgious West.

His last fond rays have kissed the mountain height,
Whose brows now bathe in twilight's hallowing beam;
The sunless o'er Heaven's engine that gory beach,
The shivering brooklets mirror back each batch.

The gentle lake sleeps tranquil e'en as death,
Save when neaphes fan it with pure breath;
Cæcilia sighs soft on the moonlight beam,
Or mands bath in its pure plash stream.

No hue of industry is here,
To set the gloom of darkness from the world;

Nor man discerns the sports of plough and plow;

Nor man strange joys rounds t'ry's "nightly dish."

But now, clothed in Nocturne's mellowing light,
Greets the dark armies of approaching night;

While such proud phantasms from her glories sip—

These starry helots in her infinite dip.

Thus is the day speeded on—and fades its light,
And e'er us flows the canopy of Night;

So man shall share about the realms of night,

Chanting eternal round the Tumult or Louren!

Then hush—ye hush—shout tempest: King of Death!

To thee give our feeble, quivering breath;

The duskye tale shall soon to chaos driven—

Give up its place to baleful groves of Heavens!

Warning to sinners, to flee from the wrath to come.

With love and pity I look round:

Upon my father e'en;

See men reject the gospel found;

Good God! what shall I say?

O sinners, sinners, will you hear?

When in God's name I name?

Upon your perdition's threshold,

Lest hell should be your doom.

Now is the time, th' accepted hour,

Lest many should withdraw;

He'll then in robes of vengeance come

To execute his law.

Then where, poor sinners, will you be,

In deserts of grace.

When you are injured Judge shall see,

And stand before his face.

Oh! can you shut that dreadful sight,

How much would you like to fly

To the dark shades of endless night

From that all searching eye.

But Death and Hell must all appear,

And you among them stand;

Death's great imperial bar,

Anguish at Christ's hot hand.

No weeping bows; nay then,

Will e'er affect my heart;

So I shall surely say, Amen.

When Christ bids you depart,

Let not those warnings be in vain,

But lend a listening ear;

Let you meet them all again,

When wept in keen despair.

Miscellany.

THE EXCELLENCE OF THE BIBLE.

A LECTURE TO CHILDREN.

BY REV. S. G. MINTON, B. A.

I am sure, my dear boys and girls, that if I were now to ask you which is the best book in the world, you would all cry out at once, "The Bible!" But if I were to ask again, "What makes it the best?" some of you might be puzzled for an answer; and if I then put the question, "Do you, then, love it the best?" they would be ready to hang down their heads in shame, ashamed to say, "No;" but not able truly to say, "Yes." There was once a very clever and learned gentleman* but an infidel—that is, one who did not believe the Scriptures—and he was travelling among the mountains and valleys of Wales. He came to a roadside cottage in a lonely, lonely spot, and, as he was very tired and thirsty, stopped to ask for a cup of water. It was a little girl he spoke to, sitting at the cottage door with a book upon her knee. She instantly rose, and said, "Will you not have a cup of milk, sir? for you are hot, and the cold water would burn you." He was very pleased with her kindness, and thought he would like a little chat with her. So when she came out with the milk, he said, "I see you are getting your lesson there, my dear." "No sir," she answered; "I am only reading." "Why, what book?" "The Bible, sir." "Wim," said he, half smiling to himself, as he gave her back the cup, "do you like that book, then?" For a moment the little maiden did not answer for surprise; then, lifting her bright eyes to his face, she said, "Why, sir, I thought that everybody loved the Bible." And the gentleman bid the child good bye, and slowly rode along. I do not know what he was thinking of then; but years after, when he had become a true and humble Christian, he used to tell of that little Welsh girl, and to say, "And I, too, now that I understand what the Bible is, am almost as ready to wonder at my question as she was; for every one who really knows it must surely love it too."

Many reasons may be given why the book of God should so be loved. Some have been mentioned in the other Lectures. I will now speak of only two—ITS CLEARNESS, and ITS SUITABILITY.

First.—The Bible is clear. A little girl once showed me a book she had had as a reward, beautifully bound, with gilt edges, and many pictures. "What a beautiful book!" I said. "Yes," she replied; "but I like this better;" and she took up a little bound volume lying by its side, old and worn, and with scarcely one picture from the beginning to the end. "And what makes you like this best?" "Because I can understand it," she said; "and the other is too hard for me." I do not remember what the books were, but I have often thought, my dear children, what a happy thing it is for us that God's book is one that we can understand—not "too hard" for any of us. Suppose the Bible were a very difficult book, that only a few wise and learned people could make out, what would the poor people do who have to work for their daily bread? and what would become of the little children? The Roman Catholic tell us

William Hone

the Bible is hard like this, and that little children and poor people must not read it; but we know better. I do not forget, my dear children, that there are a great many things in Scripture you cannot make out till you are older and wiser; and your kind teachers are here to help you to understand some of these; but you can tell me yourselves that there is much quite plain to you. And recollect this, what is most needful is the plainest. The way to heaven is all clear. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." You can understand that, can you not? Jesus said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." That is plain, is it not, my dear children? There is not an archangel in heaven who can altogether understand everything in God's book; but there is not a little one in this Sunday school who may not learn enough from it to become wise unto salvation.

You have often looked up to the sky on a bright winter's night, and have admired the stars there shining in their glory. And among the larger brighter ones you have seen others twinkling, faint and dim, like specks that you could scarcely see. Then, dinner still, there has appeared a thin white mist along the dark blue heaven, as if a high cloud lay up there far beyond the stars. But another person takes his telescope, and looks at this misty brightness, until he finds in it the light of hundreds of stars that your eyes could never see. And another, with a larger telescope, finds out thousand more, further, further still. But with a third telescope you might look deeper into the sky, and see millions more, and still not reach the end of the firmament which God has made. So is, dear children, with the truths of this blessed book. There are some great and glorious ones which, like the brightest stars, we can all see. And the longer we live—if indeed, we wish and try to learn, and ask God's Spirit to teach us—the more we shall find out, as if we used one telescope after another, to look deep into these wondrous things—and still there will be more!

"For ever willing, yet unskill'd."

And what was the second reason for which we should love the Bible? Its Fitness. Yes; and by that I mean that it is just such a book as we all want. I have spoken to you in this and the last Lecture a good deal about light. Did you ever think that one reason why the light is so pleasant and beautiful is that it is fit for all? It is a house everywhere. There comes one sunbeam, and it goes through the splendid windows of a palace, and lights up the halls where lords and ladies meet; and there goes another through the little cottage casement, to shine upon the busy, happy faces round the poor man's table. And the grand flowers in the garden, and the lowliest flowers of the field, the diamond in the Queen's crown, and the violet in the glass by the sick child's little bed, are all made beautiful by Light. Now the truths of the Bible are just like this. They are fitted for everybody; for Victoria upon her throne, and the beggar in the streets; for Eva, with her angel face, and for poor Topsy in her ignorance and rags. In the next Lecture but one, I hope to tell you what makes the Bible so fitted for all; now I only want you to remember that it is this fitness which helps to make it the best of books. It reaches you just what you need to learn, my children, now you are young, and well, and happy; and when the time of sorrow comes you will find it, if you love its truths, most precious then. I could tell you of wise men, and rich men, and of poor men, and little children, who have indeed felt the value of the Scriptures in the day of sadness, or in the hour of death. A little girl who loved the Bible dearly became blind, and when she could no longer see to read it, she only loved it more. A kind friend gave her a New Testament, printed for the use of the blind, in raised letters, which she could feel with her fingers, and so make out. Never was a child more delighted than she. It was a touching sight to see her, every moment she could spare, passing her fingers slowly over the page, as her lips silently uttered the precious words. But her touch was not quick enough for her; her finger-tips—poor child!—were rough, and sometimes she had to stop a long time over a word. So one day she took a pen-knife, and lightly passed away the skin from just the tips of her fingers, hoping that so her feeling would be more tender, and she could get on faster. What was her distress in finding after a few days that her skin had grown again, but so hard that she could not feel the shape of a single letter! She tried, and tried, but all in vain; then, bursting into agony of tears, she pressed the much-loved pages to her lips, to bid them, as she thought, a last farewell. But, as she did so, she suddenly found out that her lips had the feeling which her fingers had lost. The letters, the words, were quite plain! I cannot tell you how joy that she still could read. And hundred of times since the blessed book has been held to her lips, not in sorrow, for a farewell kiss, but in thankfulness and joy that even so she can read the words of everlasting life.

Think, then, of these two reasons. Dear children, the book of God is *plain* to you if you will seek to understand it. It is *fit* for you, and even will be so, in health and sickness, in sorrow and joy.

"Let this blessed volume lie beside
Close to my heart and near my eye;
To lie in hot hours my strengthen refuge,
And be my chosen lodgment."

—Union Magazine.

THE RUMSELLER'S DREAM.

"Well, wife, this is too horrid. I cannot continue this business any longer."

"Why, dear, what's the matter now?"

"O, such a dream, such musing of men's bones and such an army of strayed mortals; so many murders, such cries, and shrieks, and yells, and such horrid gnashing of teeth, the glaring eyes, and such a blazing fire and such devils. Oh, I cannot endure it. My hair stands on end, and I am so filled with horror that I can scarcely speak. Oh! if ever I sell run again!"

"My dear, you are frightened."

"Oh! I don't talk to me. I am determined not to have anything more to do with man, anyhow."

"Don't you think Tom Wilson came up to me with his throat cut from ear to ear, and such a horrible gash, and it was so hard for him to speak, and so

much blood; and says he, 'See here, Joe, the result of your rumselfing!' My blood chilled at the sight, and just then the house seemed to turn bottom up, and the earth opened, and a little imp took me by the hand, saying, 'Follow me.' As I went, grim devil held out to me cups of liquid fire, saying, 'Drink this.' I dared not refuse. Every draught set me in a rage. Serpents hissed upon each side, and from above reached down their heads and whispered, 'Rumseller!' On and on again he paused and said, 'Are you dry?' 'Yes,' I replied. Then he struck a trap-door with his foot, and down, down we went, the legions of fiery serpents followed us, whispering, 'Drunkard, drunkard!' That is plain, is it not, my dear children? There is not an archangel in heaven who can altogether understand everything in God's book; but there is not a little one in this Sunday school who may not learn enough from it to be wise unto salvation.

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