

"THE TRAILING ARBUTUS" OR,
"SONGS IN THE NIGHT"

By Robert Canary

As we emerge from the forest of oak, fir and pine trees on the top of the Cumberland Mountains, the southern group of the Appalachian range, and stand near the edge of the cliff, catching a view of the valley far below us, the river winding its way toward the sea, the infinite space in the distance, we are made to feel the infinite and awful presence of the omnipresent Creator, and we bare our heads in silence. Standing a moment we soon catch the unmistakable odor of that sweetly-scented floret—the little trailing arbutus.

As we do not see it (for nature has wisely provided a "green house" for its special protection, for it is early spring, and the late snows would never have permitted it to bloom), we stoop and lift back the coverlet of last fall's leaves, and then to our surprise and delight we behold the most beautiful little pink and white star-shaped blooms, all fresh and exquisite, the vines and green leaves entwined with a mass of green, velvety moss, and woven into a carpet of so entrancing a pattern as to seem almost unbelievable for perfection. Yet here it is. It may be God's private parfumerie, for here on this towering cliff there is none to enjoy its matchless odor except the birds in the forest, the wild turkeys, or a young faun as it dashes hither and yon, ever alert, or feeds on the bluberry.

But while we well may wonder at the place in nature allotted to the little trailing arbutus, there are more often peculiar places in the realm of grace into which God has placed some of His children. It is wise to assume that our heavenly Father knows where each piece of His handiwork is, and enjoys it just where He has placed it.

Many times a brother or sister has been confined to his room or bed for years, never being permitted to leave the house because of bodily afflictions. The stroke, the missing limb, the disease, one or more, have claimed their strength; the pain and suffering have been almost unbearable; yet with Christ as their Savior, sanctifier and keeper, their lives are full of perfume, sunshine and music. From the couch of pain and suffering they find occasion to praise God until all who come into their presence are made to feel the presence of God. They have learned to sing in the night (Psa. 34:19; 32:7; Job 35:10).

It may be some of God's little ones may be going through financial reverses. Sickness may have taken the money; the property; they may have lost all earthly possessions, added to which, they may have lost their employment. Yet they are in their places at church and prayer-meeting, their testimonies are full of assurance, confidence and faith, the blessing on their souls. But their earthly store is gone; adversity is their lot; they seem to have naught but shadows, with no apparent encouragement. But they look to the city whose builder and maker is God, and keep their hearts full of praise. They have learned to 'sing in the night' (Psa. 42:8; Psa. 69:3; Psa. 77:6).

So whether our paths are full of roses or thorns, with Jehovah, our salvation and shield, we are safe. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And whether our lives are conspicuous and prosperous, or, whether hid away as it were and full of disappointment, our loving heavenly Father likes to hear His children sing.

Paul was joined by Silas in blessed song at midnight, behind prison walls, and sang until the great, loving heart of their Father was touched and He made a way to victory for His trusting children. Their valley became a mountain of praise; the shadows, the door to glorious sunlight; the shame, a garden of roses; the prison walls, the "garments that smell of myrrh and aloes, out of the ivory palaces."

When Madame Guyon separated herself from the Catholic faith and was locked behind prison bars for preaching repentance and faith in Jesus she wrote those beautiful words:

"A little bird I am
Shut in from fields of air,
And now I sit and sing
All day to Him who placed me there;
Content a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee."

Yea, though we have riches or poverty, health or pain, light or shadow, mountain top or valley deep, we may rejoice as "seeing him who is invisible," and sing with the Psalmist of Israel, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

Again the promises are ours, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee. Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:1). And this one, "For I, the Lord, thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, fear not, I will help thee" (Isa. 41:13). And then we will find these words true:

"When darkness seems to veil His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace.

In every high and stormy gale

My anchor holds within the vale."

When we need a special overflow we have this promise, "For in the wilderness shall waters break out; and streams in the desert" (Isa. 35:6). All the resources of God's grace are ours if we keep our all in His hands. Let Him choose for us our place in His kingdom, if we ask for the old paths, "Where is the good way, and walk therein, we shall find rest for our souls" (Jer. 6:16).

Then best of all Jesus said, shortly before He went to the Father, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We may have the blessing so upon us that we would "vie with Gabriel, while he sings, in notes almost divine." Where is there a child of God so depressed he can not feel that the sun will shine again, if he has learned to sing songs in the night?—*The Free Methodist*.

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

To have true friends and be worthy of them is a great challenge. I have heard that friendship is like the ivy vine, the greater the ruin the closer it clings. In a certain kind of relationship this saying applies, where the love of compassion is involved, but that kind of relationship is not the kind that we have in mind when we are choosing a mate for life, and when we wish to enjoy the contact of kindred souls and strong characters who share with us the great verities of religion. This is love in the fine realm of equality and complacence in character.

It is a selfish scheme of life to use your friends as so many rungs of a ladder, serving you by way of a boost into some coveted place or advancement, and always with the selfish motive of getting ahead at the expense of others. One of the greatest tests of a man in public office is the kind of friendships he develops, and the way he treats his friends. Readers of history will re-

call a former president of the United States who exercised his prerogatives, learned as a schoolmaster, of ousting his closest advisers and friends, and that without much consideration as to where and how they would land.

Going farther back in history, recall what a great friend to humanity Abraham Lincoln was, and his remarkable experience of selecting as a cabinet his chief competitors for office and by sheer strength of character and native ability, winning them to him and a great cause. It is told of Stephen A. Douglass, whom he defeated in various political contests, that he took the President's hat at the inauguration to hold it with the words: "If I could not be president I can hold the president's hat." And the jealous William H. Seward, chief contender for the nomination in 1860, after accepting the office of secretary of state with reluctance, because Lincoln was not, as he thought, as seasoned a statesman as himself, wrote to his wife after he was in office for a time: "The President is the best of us."

If we wish to have a large faculty of friendship we must set out to enjoy our friends. The habit of a critical judging of the faults and weaknesses of our friends will grow and become an effective barrier to the best adventures in friendship.—*The Wesleyan Methodist*.

CHEERFULNESS

The Bible reader who has a complete concordance will probably be pleasantly surprised to find the number of times and the occasions when Jesus commended good cheer to folks. One instance may serve to start you on the quest. The time was the last night of His earthly life, the occasion, the closing words of His conversation recorded in the sixteenth chapter of John. He said: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Now, this was spoken in absolute sincerity. The cross was just ahead for Him, and long years of opposition and martyrdom for them, yet they were bidden by the Master to "be of good cheer."

We may share in this good cheer, since Christ's victory over the world has in it the same virtue for us as for them, though we must let time and the great purposes of God work out the full accomplishment of that victory. An unknown writer says:

"The world has always need of good cheer. There are always so many depressing people that every one who carries sunshine in the heart and in his face is a public benefactor. Great cheer is often largely a matter of temperament; but it is not always so, and the best kind of cheerfulness is not dependent upon temperament. It is faith which enables us to look on the bright side of everything, and it is love that makes us forget our own cares and discomforts in trying to do something for others. Those who walk closely in the footsteps of Jesus walk in sunshine. They have bright faces whose gaze is constantly fixed on the Light of the world."—*The Wesleyan Methodist*.

"A fine translation of a familiar verse. 'God is able to bless you with ample means, so that you may always have enough money for every emergency of your own, and besides for any act of kindness toward others.'"—*Herald of Holiness*.

When religion is studied as a science, nothing is more abstruse; when studied in order to know our duty and practice it, nothing is easier.—*Fausset*.