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Poetry.

Easter.

BY MRS. J. HOPE ARTHUR.

In the far-off land of the sunrise,
In the early Easter-morn,
Where the winds of heaven breathe softest,
My sweet heart-flower was born.

Did I stand between it and heaven,
That it faded away so soon?
Or the warmth of my heart-love scorch it,
Like the heat of a burning moon?

For it faded, it faded,—I watched it,
And the plant from which it grew,
It withered, it withered before me,
For the lack of the heavenly dew.

I carried my plant and my flower,
I carried them over the sea;
I thought perhaps in the home-land
It would bloom again for me.

But they faded, oh they faded!
And I stand at the Easter-dawn;
But what if my plant has withered,
And what if my flower has gone?

I will work through all life's harvest,
And will hide the secret pain,
While I care for the flowers of others,
And help to gather the grain.

I will wait till the south winds blow
In the time of the springing corn;
I will wait to see my flower
At its resurrection morn.

In the love of the holy Christ,
I will watch for that Easter day
When glorious will be the beauty
Of the flower I laid away.

And glorious will be the beauty,
Of the plant that once was mine,
At that celestial sunrise,
Bathed in the dews divine.

For the love of my plant and flower,
To the Easter glories born,
In the love of Christ I wait
For that resurrection morn.

—Watchman.

The Background of Memory.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

To youth the future is invested with an indescribable charm. As we grow older the past engages our thoughts far more than the days to come. Live as we may and must in the vivid realities of the present, we nevertheless find ourselves going often and lovingly to the treasure house of memory.

As far back as we can remember takes us to those early years when we were just emerging from babyhood. We have no continued history of that period of life in our minds, but scenes, pictures, impressions, and tones, in a fashion more or less arbitrary, have fastened themselves upon the canvass, and are fixed there in photographic clarity. We remember the birth of a little brother, the death of a grandparent or the coming home of a traveller. We were very tiny pilgrims in this world of care when we grasped a thistle flower in a hasty and vehement clutch and found that it stung. We have forgotten everything about a certain house in which we once spent several very happy summer months, except that it contained a garret, and a certain door was blue. We are told of a lady who was in our childhood a guest of the family, but her name calls up no per-

sonal association except with the trivial circumstance that she wore a necklace of grat amber-hued beads, which were our admiration. Of such bits, such fragments, are our earliest memories composed.

Hour by hour, and day by day, the years and lustrums of our lives have glided onward, and after a while we find that our most prized wealth has been quietly accumulating through our seasons of business and pleasure, our times of earnest activity and occasional repose. One by one friends have dropped our hands and gone from us to the invisible world. Everything in our surroundings has changed. We wonder at times if we are the same person who lived a score of years ago amid environments so different and among companions many of whom have left us. "Oh for a touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still!" is often the cry of our grieved and aching hearts.

And yet, if we could, we would not accept the responsibility of conducting our lives ourselves. We feel that it is far better to trust the love and wisdom of our Heavenly Father. In times of shadow and bereavement, the Lord is more than ever our confidence, and we know that he regards us tenderly and controls the events of our years in kindness. No accident befalls. Every day we are guided by an unsleeping Providence. What seems to be evil is really working towards our best good. Cowper's familiar stanza is full of truth:

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercies, and will break
With blessing on your head.

No chastisement for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous. It is only afterwards that it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who have been under the loving discipline of God. We realize this as in some days of clear vision we gaze into the background of memory, we perceive then how the very troubles which in their bearing seemed insupportable, wrought for joy and gladness. The lessons which were so hard to learn led us into a wonder-world of beauty. The hills which were so difficult of ascent showed us from the summit wide landscapes smiling in the sun. The streams where we were almost overwhelmed turned into silvery fountains fed from the sea of glass which flows around the throne.

There come to us all, in our home life, experiences which we cannot comprehend. We are dumb with amazement. A parent is removed from earth. It is the father who was not only the bread-winner for the family, but their protector, their teacher and their bulwark against misfortune and suffering. Or it is the mother, whose brooding gentleness, whose unsurpassed tenderness and tireless patience, and whose constant vigilance were priceless to her little ones. We say, why is this? Why should this home nest be broken, and these fledglings exposed to tempest and cold? It is past our finding out. But God knows all about it. He sees that the boys and girls, forced to push the sooner out for themselves, will, it may be, learn self-reliance, and will be stronger than they would have been had the father remained for them to lean upon. He has taken the mother, but the impressions of her faithful teachings, and the influence of her fair example, and the perfume of her memory shall do more for her children than she could have done had she remained with them. Here her power over them was great, but from the heavenly land, as it reaches downward it is far greater. Missing her more and more deeply as they go onward, her sons and daughters will ever be growing into the consciousness that they are under obligations to love and obey their mother's God.

We ought to learn from the mingled experiences of the past the necessity of improving the present hour. What thou doest, do quickly. Is there somebody in need of a sympathetic word? Do not postpone its utterance. Are you impressed with the feeling that you ought to call upon a sick friend, or write a comforting letter, or send a contribution to a beneficent cause? Do not defer it. There are heaven-prompted impulses which we disregard to our future pain and regret. The duty nearest us, whether it be a large or a

small one, whether it be charming a weary hour away for an invalid, or amusing a fretful child, or studying an abstruse theme, or making the house neat and attractive for its inmates, let us take it up and perform it heartily, as to the Lord. So the past will come to be a stimulus and an inspiration, while we seize the present and use it as a sacred gift from our Father above.

Doctrine of Job.

Few men are better qualified to speak of the doctrine of Job than Dr. Conant. The following are his words: "In the book of Job we are taught (1) That the apparently arbitrary distribution of the good and evil of this life is not the result of chance or caprice, for God, the creator and judge of all, infinitely wise, just, and good, presides over and controls the affairs of earth. His providential care extends to all His creatures. He has the power to restrain or chastise wrong, and avenge suffering innocence, and this power He uses when and how He will. (2) That the government of the world belongs of right to Him who created it; whose infinite justice can do no wrong; whose perfect wisdom and love devise only what is best; whose omniscience cannot err in the choice of means; who is infinite in power and does all His pleasure. (3) That to know this is enough for man, and that more than this he cannot know; God can impart to him no more, since Omniscience alone can comprehend the purposes and plans of the Infinite. (4) That man's true position is implicit trust in the Infinitely Wise, Just, and Good, and submission to His Will. That here alone, the finite comes into harmony with the infinite, and finds true peace; for if it refuses to trust until it can comprehend, it must be in eternal discord with God and with itself."

The Baptist Sect.

Mr. S. B. Jackson, who, it seems, has been spoken of at a public meeting by a Mr. Forwood as "belonging to the tail of the Liberal party, the narrowest part of that party—the Baptist sect," writes to the *Liverpool Mercury* in defence. He says: "This impertinent reference to my religious opinions was no compliment to Mr. Forwood's audience, nor any evidence of his own historic acquirements, being an attempt to prejudice my position by a vulgar appeal to the implied bigotry of his hearers, and real or assumed ignorance of the fact that the Baptists have ever stood in the van of the pioneers of civil liberty and religious equality, while they have also been amongst the most loyal and law-abiding of their fellow-subjects. Notwithstanding, and for the reason that they have always been nearer the heart than 'the tail of the Liberal party,' few Christians have suffered more from bigotry, ignorance and intolerance than the Baptists in this and other parts of Europe from the time of the exiled patriot and Baptist, Roger Williams, to that of the poor Baptist laborer the other day at Akenham. Bunyan was a Baptist, and the bigots of that day imprisoned him for preaching the Gospel. General Havelock was one of 'the Baptist sect,' but of him we read that in a critical emergency in the war with Burmah, when Sir Archibald Campbell could not rely upon any part of his army to occupy a particular post of danger, he said, 'Call out Havelock's saints; they are never drunk'; and so the general's object was achieved, and the enemy repulsed. At another time certain bigots tried their utmost to prevent his promotion. Lord William Bentinck caused an enquiry to be made as to whether the complaints against Havelock were of any weight, when it was found that Havelock's soldiers were the most sober and well behaved in the regiment. The complaint, said the Governor-general, 'that they are Baptists. I only wish that the whole regiment was Baptist.' A while ago some bigoted officials dismissed a domestic from the royal household, one whose behaviour the Queen had observed with approbation. The Queen missed her from her accustomed place, and on learning that the girl's attendance at a Baptist meeting-house had led to her

removal, Her Majesty immediately commanded her restoration to her former position."

Alone with Jesus.

BY MRS. A. SPRAGUE.

Alone with Jesus! Leave me here,
Without a wish, without a fear;
My pulse is weak, and faint my breath,
But is He not the Lord of death?
And if I live or if I die,
'Tis all the same when he is nigh.

Alone with Jesus! Ye who weep,
And round my bed your vigils keep,
My love was never half so strong,
And yours—Oh, I have proved it long;
But when has earthly friend the power
To comfort in the dying hour?

Alone with Jesus! O how sweet,
In health to worship at his feet;
But sweeter far, when day by day
We droop, and pine, and waste away,
To feel his arm around us close,
And in his bosom find repose.

Alone with Jesus! How secure!
Vile in myself, in him how pure!
The tempests howl, the waters beat,
They harm me not in my retreat;
Night deepens—mid its gloom and chill,
He draws me nearer to him still.

Alone with Jesus! What alarms
The infant in its mother's arms?
Before me death and judgment rise;
I lean my head and close my eyes;
There's nought for me to fear or do;
I know that he will bear me through.

Alone with Jesus! Earth grows dim,
I even see my friends through him;
Time, space, all things below, above,
Reveal to me one life, one love,—
That one in whom all glories shine,
All beauties meet,—that one is mine.

Self-Examination.

It is a well-known fact of elementary physics that the planets are kept in their proper course by the operation of opposing forces. Either alone would be destructive. Left to the operation of gravity the earth would fall into the sun. Under the impulse of its own proper motion it would abandon its sister planets and go whirling off into illimitable space. It is by the perfect balance of these antagonistic and mutually corrective forces that our earth is kept rigidly in its exact pathway in the heavens, and that all our family of worlds roll on so smoothly along the invisible but well-adjusted tracks of creation.

The life of the Christian may be compared to the orbit of the planet. To a certain extent its proper control depends on mutually corrective forces. The centrifugal impulse, uncontrolled, would lead to asceticism, to monkish isolation, to a life that is selfish in its very sanctity and useless in its seclusion. The other would force him into the thick and whirl of unrestrained outward activity. The safety and best development of Christian character depends upon the nice balance of these opposing forces. Once the danger was in the too great development of the centrifugal forces of life. Now the peril lies in the opposite direction.

It is an age of intense activity. The Christian of to-day is in the thick of its clamorous, crowded, pushing life. Activity and not meditation characterizes the age. If men think at all, it is usually in such a hurried, superficial way that their minds give back only the froth and foam of conviction, and not the calm stability of a deep and settled judgment. The seed of truth springs up apace because it has no depth of root, but we look in vain for substantial fruitage or wide-reaching and perennial growth.

The Christian should watch and pray that the vitality of individual holiness should not suffer in this busy life. Doing is well. God crowns it with His richest blessing. But, after all, acts are only the outgrowth. They tell of the life within, but they are not by any means confounded with it. Indeed there is such a thing as inward decay keeping pace with outward activity, the hollow shell of piety becoming more and more resonant as its substance departs. A still and secret life of faith and prayer must vitalize all holy living. Meditation and intimate soul-communion with God must be the fountain of duty and the stimulus of Christian activity. There must be periods when the soul as it were rests from its outward labours, and turns in upon itself; when it questions and reviews and scrutinizes; when the solemn truths of Revelation are applied with searching and faithful power to the sore places of the heart. If the Christian shrinks from such a duty, he may be certain that it is needful

for spiritual soundness and growth. The surgeon is often most merciful when he uses most faithfully the knife and the probe. The shrinking reluctance of the patient, the tender, shuddering nerves, the outcry of "the flesh," are but the sure symptoms of the dangerous malady with which he has to deal. So should we be faithful in the use of the Gospel probe. The "hurt" of sin is no superficial wound. Health and healing come only with the most searching use of God's appointed means of cure.—*Lord. Bapt.*

Robert Hall's Last Sermon.

Rev. Dr. Carruthers gives some reminiscences of Rev. Robert Hall that are not without interest. He heard, it seems, Mr. Hall preach his last sermon in Broadmead Chapel, Bristol, and he thus describes it: "Mr. Hall's last sermon (text, Luke xii. 15) was preached on an evening of Sabbath, February 7, 1831, and a sketch of it is found in the fourth volume of his works (American edition). This is accurate as an outline, but omits what to the writer were the most impressive parts of the discourse. The peroration is indelibly stamped on the tablet of his memory. The preacher had depicted with great force the effect of covetousness on the intellect, the heart, and the character of its miserable victim; but when he came to speak of the miser's future destiny, a picture was presented which for harrowing horror baffles all description. He was, by absorbing selfishness, bereft of all human sympathy whilst he lived, and when he died and entered into hell, evil spirits shrank from contact with a mind materialized by the love of money, assimilated to the object of his vile idolatry, and utterly unfit for the society even of devils. They left him to wander alone in the dismal shades of pandemonium, revolving over the three questions which through life had occupied, engrossed, and all but destroyed his mind, 'How can money be gained? how kept? how increased?' No words can express the writer's feelings. He retired from the sanctuary overwhelmed with the emotions excited by this unparalleled discourse. Sleep for many hours forsook his pillow, and every subsequent mental recurrence to that memorable discourse has only deepened the impression of Robert Hall's supremacy as a pulpit orator. Yet this was not the impression at the time. Throughout the discourse the preacher was forgotten. He forgot himself. Not the slightest appearance of self-consciousness was visible. His own mind and those of his hearers were absorbed by the thoughts that flowed in easy, natural, and soul-affecting cadence from his lips. The writer had the happiness and honour of a protracted interview with Mr. Hall during the preceding week. Mr. Hall never again addressed his people from the pulpit, but spoke on the evening of the 9th of February, in the vestry, to the members of the church. In a few days more he was in heaven."

John's Baptism.

Rev. F. W. Robertson, the late incumbent of Trinity chapel, Brighton, England, in a sermon on Matthew iii. 7, says: "Once more, John's baptism implied the necessity of a renewal of heart. We lose part of the significance of that ceremony from its transplantation away from a climate in which it was natural and appropriate. Ablution in the East is almost a religious duty; the dust and heat weigh upon the spirits and heart like a load; the removal is refreshment and happiness. And it was impossible to see that significant contact—in which the convert went down into the water, travel-worn and soiled with dust, disappeared for one moment, and then emerged pure and fresh—without feeling that the symbol answered to, and interpreted, a strong craving of the human heart. What an impulse would be given to the cause of Truth, if such men as the Revisor of Greek Lexicons at Moncton, and the defender of decency in Baptism, at Hopewell Corner, would imbibe some of the frankness and candor which mark the references of this, and all other scholars to the primitive mode of administration of this blessed ordinance." —*John.*