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A Mother by the Grave of her Son.

I kneel beside thy lowly bed,
My buried son;
And bitter, bitter tears I shed,
That thou art gone.
My yearning heart in vain implores
One sweet embrace;
In vain its fervent longing pours
To see thy face.
The cold grave still its dark watch keeps,
Mute and alone;
Thy manly form within it sleeps,
And I weep on.

My streaming tears a mirror then
Beside me;
And all thy life rolls back again
To memory.
I see thy childhood's gentle face,
Thy boyish sport;
I read thy youth's bold, earnest grace,
Thy manhood's thought.
I stand beside thy weary couch,
To see those waste;
And feel again that old death-touch,
That came at last.

I catch that bright, awakening smile,
As heaven drew near—
Ah, heaven, that death-hour to beguile,
Did open there!
And Jesus, with his holy hands,
Came winging thence,
To take thee from our yielding hands,
And bear thee hence;
And from that opening glory streaming
So pure a light,
Thy face with seraph brightness beamed,
To our fond sight.

Thy silvery notes rang soft and clear
At heaven's gate,
As angel-gift, thou drewest near
Thy glad estate;
Poor, breaking heart! Why weep again?
Thy grief dispel;
Thy son God's angel is! Ah! then,
My tears, farewell!

Now still beside thy lowly bed
I kneel, my son,
But no more bitter tears I shed
That thou art gone.
My human heart would vainly implore
A sweet embrace,
Would still its fervent longings pour,
To see thy face.
But all the cold grave cannot keep
What most I love!
The clay may sleep an endless sleep;
I look above!

Recollections of a Pastor's Daughter.

NOVEL READING.

Good old Mr. Brown used to say, "I do wonder why people will read novels, when there is so much truth to be read." My father sympathized with him, but there was a time when my sisters and I thought otherwise. Whenever my father found us engaged in this way, he looked displeased; and, not unfrequently, although our hearts and hands were most critically situated, as heroes and heroines are apt to be, and we were distressed in their distresses, we were obliged, like other false friends, to forsake them in the midst of their difficulties. Once when my father positively forbade us to read another novel without his permission, I answered, very improperly, "I think novels are much more interesting than theology; I hate such dull books." This reply soon met with its own retribution. "Now, Ellen," said my father, "don't you read any other book but the Bible, until you have gone through one entire volume of 'Ridgely's Body of Divinity'." I did not dare to disobey, and the hours which were usually devoted to my favourite authors were spent in what seemed to me wading through an intellectual quagmire. Poems, reviews, histories, lay neglected on the shelf; and to complete my misery, "The Last Days of Pompeii," about that time, made its appearance. It had been so warmly recommended by one of our acquaintances, that my sisters were allowed to read it. I was shut out from that paradise of fruits and flowers, and doomed to wander through the desert, to roam through strange places with my eyes wilfully blinded; for when I had actually finished the last page of Ridgely's Body of Divinity, I was as ignorant of its contents as are most of girls of sixteen, who never thought they had read it. However, my task was done. I had obeyed the letter of the law, if not its spirit. Since that time, theological writings have become interesting to me. That science which treats of God, his works, and ways, seems as far above all other sciences as the heavens are above the earth; but Ridgely will never become a favourite author with me.

But how right our parents were in discouraging us from reading novels, time and observation have taught us. How many have made shipwreck here! Perhaps some one replies, "I know of respectable and intellectual people who have read novels, and were not hurt by them." Very true, and so a person may escape from a burning house, and the shipwrecked mariner, grasping his solitary plank, may at last reach the shore; yet these instances do not prove that a burning house and plank at sea have therefore become safe places. Let us look abroad and see who are the novel readers? Do the best and most useful classes of mankind take these books for their companions? It is not the healthy and the laborious who feed upon poisoned sweets; it is the idle, enervated, useless, and criminal, who waste their lives in this way. If the intellect is left unimpaired by such a course of reading, the standard of right becomes changed and lowered, the morals are made to sympathize with that class of writers who have little or no morality of their own to boast of, and who would fain make the public heart as corrupt as their own. Who would willingly send his child to school to a known libertine, who has forgotten to distinguish between good and

evil? Yet every parent does this who allows his child to read novels, indiscriminately, as they come from the press. If these works thus undermine morality, can religion escape?—not the sentimental religion which consists in shedding tears over imaginary sorrow, nor the pharisaic religion whose foundation and superstructure is its own righteousness; but can the religion of the Bible flourish in such an unwholesome atmosphere? Does it but in better repulse in society than the cross, thistle and blossom amid such uncongenial rubbish?

Do novels give wisdom where it is wanting, or increase wisdom where it already exists? Do they fortify the heart for the duties and ills of life? Their effect upon the intellect is well known to those who will look at them and see, or, it may be, look within them and observe the effects of such reading upon their own minds. Not only do novels give a positive distaste for better books, but, in many instances, they have undermined reason. I once heard of a young lady who was most thoroughly ruined in this way. She read fiction year after year, her morbid appetite for it increasing by indulgence, till she at length forgot how to draw the line between the imaginary and the real. She ceased to feel an interest in things around her, began to think herself a heroine, and the world she lived in was no longer this working-day world. It was a world of romance. She shut herself up in her chamber, for long months and years, awaiting the arrival of some foreign lord or prince, who, hearing of her surpassing charms, would claim her as his bride. Amid such miserable delusions as these, the poor victim of novel reading wasted her life.

One of our acquaintances affords another pitiful illustration of the evil effects of novel reading. She was the daughter of an infirm old gentleman, who had once been rich, but in better repute in society than he was when we knew the family. The Flemings felt above their circumstances, and were quite disposed to repine at the dealings of providence with them. How much they needed true religion's soothing, encouraging, strengthening power! How much they needed the Bible for their constant companion! Sophia Fleming, my friend, was a church member, but in her best days did little to adorn her profession, and why? She was the most inveterate novel reader I ever knew. If you saw her with a book in her hand, it was most probably a novel. She described the characters described in novels in her common conversation, and not at all as a thing by the by, but as though they were real living, and breathing men and women. When out of the regions of romance, for stern realities would sometimes compel her to open her eyes, she was one of the most unhappy persons I ever knew. She was vexed at the dealings of Providence; she was vexed at society for being so unconscious of her superior claims upon it; and envious of those whose situation was better than her own. When we left the city, we lost sight of her for a while. Then we heard she was married to a worthy and wealthy young merchant. A few years more passed, and we heard her husband had purchased an elegant residence in one of our New England towns, abounding within and without with all that could please the eye or satisfy the reasonable expectations of the heart.

The next news we heard of poor Sophia Fleming was of her sad fall. A wife and a mother, she deserted her own husband and children for a stranger. Yes, she forsook the husband of her youth, who had married her in her poverty and obscurity, who had been proverbially observant and tender of her interests, who had refused to believe in her guilt till it confronted him in his public walks and stared him in the face, she left this husband for a villain of graceful manners and fascinating address. The name of "mother," so sacred to the heart, can never be heard by her poor children without a blush. Who was her seducer? It was the novel's insidious poison, which for years had been her meat and drink. Will any dare to walk in her footsteps by reading her favourite authors? If any will persist in this course, it would not be strange if they fall as she fell; for it is most true, that a man is known by the books he reads, as by the company he keeps.

My father once visited a man imprisoned for murder, one who, although afterwards acquitted by his judges, was yet condemned by public sentiment; who, though he had escaped the laws of his country, could not escape the divine sentence. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," for his iniquity afterwards found him out. Exiled from his home and kindred retribution followed him, and he died a violent death at the hand of another. My father visited this man in his prison, and observed that his table and his shelves were loaded with books. On looking them over, he found them to be novels! How large an influence these books had in forming his wretched character, that day which shall reveal the secrets of all hearts alone can determine.

Church Poets of Scotland.

[Part of an article in the Edinburgh Witness.]

The greatest poet that did actually arise within the Church during the century was Thomson's contemporary, Robert Blair—a man who was not an idle minister, and who, unlike his cousin Hugh, belonged to the Evangelical side. The author of the "Grave" was one of the bosom friends of Colman, Gardner, and a valued correspondent of Doddridge and Watts. Curiously enough, though the great merit of his piece has been acknowledged by critics such as Southey, it has been regarded as an imitation of the "Night Thoughts" of Young. "Blair's 'Grave,'" says Southey, in his "Life of Cowper," "is the only poem I can call to mind which has been composed in imitation of the 'Night Thoughts';" and though Campbell himself steered clear of the error, we find it introduced in a note, as supplementary to the information regarding Blair given in his "Essay on English Poetry" by his editor, Mr. Cunningham. It is demonstrable, however, that the

Scottishman could not have been the imitator. As shown by a letter in the Doddridge collection, which bears date more than a twelve-month previous to that of the publication of even the first book of the "Night Thoughts," Blair, after stating that his poem, then in the hands of Isaac Watts, had been offered without success to two London publishers, states further, that the greater part of it had been written previous to the year 1731, ere he had yet entered the ministry; whereas the first book of Young's poem was not published until the year 1742, and its seventh book not until 1744. Poetry such as that of Blair is never the result of imitation; its verbal happiness is at least as great as those of the "Night Thoughts" themselves, and its power and earnestness considerably greater. "The eighteenth century," says Thomas Campbell, "has produced few specimens of blank verse of so powerful and simple a character as that of the 'Grave.' It is a popular poem, not merely because it is religious, but because its language and imagery are free, natural, picturesque. The latest editor of the poem has, with singularly bad taste, noted some of the author's most nervous and expressive phrases as vulgarisms, among which he reckons that of friendship, the 'soldier of society.' Blair may be a homely, and even a gloomy poet, in the eye of fastidious criticism; but there is a masculine and pronounced character even in his gloom and homeliness, that keeps it most distinctly apart from either dullness or vulgarity. His style pleases us like the powerful expression of a countenance without regular beauty." Such is the judgment on Blair—destined, in all appearance, to be the final one—of a writer who was at once the most catholic of critics and the most polished of poets.

There succeeded to the author of the "Grave," a group of poets of the Church, of whom the Church has not been greatly in the habit of boasting. Of Home, by a curious chance, the successor of Blair in his parish, little need be said. He produced one good play, and five enormously bad ones; and his connection with the Church was very much an accident, and soon dissolved. Blacklock, too, was as much a curiosity as a poet; and, save for his blindness, would scarce have been very celebrated in even his own day. Nor was Ogilvie, though more favourably regarded by Johnson than most of his Scottish contemporaries, other than a mediocre poet. He is the author, however, of a very respectable paraphrase—the last—of all his works the one that promises to live the longest; and we find the productions of several other poets of the Church similarly preserved, whose other writings have died. And yet the group of Scottish literati that produced our paraphrases, if looking simply to literary accomplishments—we do not demand genius—must be regarded as a very remarkable one, when we consider that the greater number of the individuals which composed it were all at one time the ministers of a single Church—and that one of the smallest. We know of no Church, either in Britain or elsewhere, that could now command such a committee as that which sat, at the bidding of the General Assembly, considerably more than sixty years ago, to prepare the "Translations and Paraphrases." Of the sixty-eight pieces of which the collection is composed, thirty are the work of Scottish ministers; and the ground-work of most of the others, furnished in large part by the previously existing writings of Watts and Doddridge, has been greatly improved, in at least the composition, by the emendations of Morrison and Logan. With all its faults, we know of no other collection equal to it as a whole. The meretricious stanzas of Brady and Tate are inanity itself in comparison. True, the later Blair, though always sensible, was often times quite heavy enough in the pieces given to him to render more so than in his prose; though, even when first introduced to that, Cowper could explain, not a little to the chagrin of those who regarded it as the perfection of writing, "O, the sterility of that man's fancy!" Indeed, he has any such facility belonging to him; Dr. Blair has such a brain as Shakespeare somewhere describes—"dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage." But the fancy that Blair wanted, poor Logan had, and the man who too severely criticises his flowing and elegant paraphrases, would do well to beware of the memories of his children. A poet whose pieces cannot be forgotten may laugh at the critics. Altogether, our "Translations and Paraphrases" are highly creditable to the literary taste and ability of the Church during the latter half of the last century; and it serves to show how very much matters changed in this respect in about forty years, that while in the earlier period the men fitted for such a work were all to be found within the pale of the Church's ministry, at a later time, when the late Principal Baird set himself, with the sanction of the General Assembly, to devise means for adding to the collection, and for revising our metrical version of the Psalms, he had to look for assistance almost exclusively to poets outside the precincts of even its membership.

The Puritans.

The Puritans were, perhaps, the most remarkable body of men which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the restoration, they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the stanzas of licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were the most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were, therefore, abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long gowns, their Hebrew names, the Scriptural phrases which they introduced

on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learnt. And he who approaches the subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has misled so many excellent writers.

«Non il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio
Il mortal perigli in se contiene;
Per cui tener a fren nostro a desio
Di esser cauti molto a noi conviene»

Those who roused the people to resistance—who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years—who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen—who trampled down King, Church, and Aristocracy—who in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth, were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were more external badges, like signs of freemasonry, or the dresses of friars. We regret that a body, to whose courage and talents mankind has owed inestimable obligations, had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles I. or the easy good breeding for which the court of Charles II. was celebrated. But if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play, turn from the specious caskets which contain only the death's head and the Fool's heart, and fix our choice on the plain leaden chest which contains the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and external instincts. Not content with acknowledging, in general terms, an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolable brightness, and to commune with him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared to the boundless interval which separated the whole race from him on whom their eyes were constantly fixed. They recognize no title to superiority but his favour; and confident of that favour, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of angels had charge of them. Their palaces were houses of prayer; their robes, light of the dust before his Maker; his he set his foot on the neck of the king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions and groans, and tears. He was madly devoted to glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the voices of angels, or the tempestuous whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennium year. Like Fleetwood, he cried his face from him. But when he took his seat in the church, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncounted vigils, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining laments, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh, who encountered them in the hall of debate, or on the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military matters a coolness of judgement, and an unmountability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal. But which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but

not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them stoics, had cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world like Sir Artegale's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain; not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to be the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdities of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We are weary of one of their maxims was often acquired by long after things too high for mortal ears. And we know in spite of their harshness, they too often had a system of rigid and their cruelties. We are weary of DeMontforts, their bars. Yet when we are in consideration, we are a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the Presbyterian Witness.

Who is right? a few words with the Rev. Alexander Forrester.

Sir,—The observations which Mr. Forrester has "felt it to be his duty" to make on my letter of December 2, seen to warrant, if not greatly to demand, a recurrence to the subject; and I am happy to think, that on several of the points touched by Mr. Forrester, he and I are entirely at one.

I. We are at one as to the character and ability of the Deputation to New Brunswick; his "sagacity" and so forth. There is not one syllable in my letter of a contrary import or intent. My dissatisfaction related, and relates, not to what the Deputation did in New Brunswick, but to what he did not do in Scotland; and, on reflection, Mr. Forrester will doubtless discover that these two things differ so widely, that to confound them involves the annihilation of both time and space. In truth, the Deputation was not permitted to leave New Brunswick without a most enthusiastic expression of our appreciation of the deep interest which he discovered in our affairs, and it is just on this very account, to speak only for myself, that I for one feel all the more mortified that, in such a case, we should be furnished with an additional illustration of the truth of the maxim, "out of sight out of mind." As to the "compliments," still too few, which a writer in "some of the periodicals" bestowed on the Deputation to New Brunswick, I am almost ashamed to say that, to the best of my recollection, I never read them; and, as Mr. Forrester seems as sensitive in regard to these eulogies as if they had stood towards him in the endearing relation of being his own literary offspring, it affords me peculiar pleasure to have an opportunity of assuring him that they never were "held up to ridicule" by me.

2. We are at one as to the fact of a "Report" having been made by the Deputation on his return. This, as every body knows, was simply a matter of course. Nor did I complain that the Report was not published. I may, however, now observe, that either the Report in question ought not to have been promised, or having been promised, ought to have been published; and that Mr. Forrester has been singularly unsuccessful in accounting for its non-publication. Save that by an exercise of imagination, he can produce a conceivable reason for the fact, it is evident from his letter that he does not know a single thing about it. The proper arithmetical expression for the measure of his knowledge is a cypher. But let no one suppose that Mr. Forrester is anything hindered by his avowed ignorance in reaching the conclusion at which he wishes to arrive. "It is quite true," he avers, "that the promised Report was never published, and, for *ought* I know, it was infinitely better that it was not." Thus Mr. Forrester gravely suspects "infinity" upon nothing, and then "has no hesitation" in pronouncing upon the merit of the performance; nor, indeed, will any one else. Even granting,

as he goes on to affirm, that "many" ings and evils have arisen from put being given to such Reports on occasions," Mr. Forrester knows, the "tation would be the errors of

Macaulay.

up a copy of the *Forrester*, see, that over and beyond the selections to the regular schemes, the spontaneous liberality of the christian people is ever being drawn forth, even in private, towards the objects so presented, not to mention the bearing of reliable life like sketches "of our general wants and long cherished expectations" upon the collections themselves. In the vain hope that something of this kind might have been done, we have taken up *Record* after *Record* only to be again and again disappointed. Hope deferred has made the heart sick. If our attachment to the Parent church had been less, we might have been more indifferent as to the place which we occupied in her remembrances.

Such being the true intent, and manifest import of my letter, on this point, if Mr. Forrester "felt it to be his duty" to impugn my statements, there were, in the nature of things, only two modes of doing so. He might either shew, or attempt to shew, that I had no right to expect such kindly recollections and services from the Deputation after his departure from amongst us, or that he actually rendered the services in question. But Mr. Forrester has made no such attempt. Now, if it were at all necessary, I hold myself prepared to prove that the information and statistics obtained were *avowedly* collected, not merely for the purpose of guiding the committee, but of interesting the church. Statistics, surely, are not an end, but only a means, and the same observation applies to the Colonial Committee itself. It is for us, and not for it. For what other purpose, than that above indicated, was it that sketches of a number of the material structures of our churches were obtained by the Deputation, some by the aid of the Daguerreotype artist, at no small expense, others the product of the pencilings of delicate fingers? Was it not that the concrete reality of things as they are in New Brunswick might be the better made to appear—the corporeal being thus made to assist the mental vision—of the people of Scotland? And had we been thus honoured with a pictorial history, it would at least have pleased us, and for aught Mr. Forrester knows, it might have affected the liberality of the church at home, and encouraged her in helping forward other congregations to the same measure of goodly development to which the St. John Presbyterian Church, Sydney Street Free Church, and Richbuckto have attained. Nor would a sketch of the Free Church College of the Lower Provinces have come amiss in the same connection, with an account of the youth who have been gathered from these new seats of habitation to that new Hall of learning. Had the steeples of the respective churches just named, found themselves in company some fine morning in the *Record*, they might have had, for aught Mr. Forrester knows, an "infinitely" amusing "crack" together—one not merely agreeable to themselves, but instructive to us, unless indeed, like some other lofty personages, they should affect a difficulty in "deigning" to speak; when, in point of fact, they may have nothing pertinent to say.

Reserving some topics for a future occasion,
I am, as ever, yours,
X.