

Christian Family.

MISS MARY STUMP, EDITOR.

Is It Come?

Nearly a quarter of a century ago the following poem obtained a prize of some twenty-five pounds sterling, we believe. We first saw it in 1856, in some exchange received at the office of a paper with which we were connected in one of the Southern States. An editorial note stated that it was written by a young Scottish woman. We did not see it again until it was republished in this city two or three years since. We reproduce it in the *Portico*, not because we think the writer did well in seeking an answer for the question, "Is it come?" among the worn-out creeds of a dead past, but because it is a remarkable exemplification of the truth of the apothegm that "Poetry is the short-hand of thought." In these half dozen verses the familiar with history will find a suggestive epitome of the many widely-varying beliefs in which the philosophic mind of the world has sought the answer to the riddle of the Universal Sphinx which, to-day, as of yore, looks grimly down upon the desert of unbelief.

"The same old question on her awful lips." There is a more encouraging answer to the poet's question than she has given us in her eloquent lines:

Is it come? they said on the banks of the Nile

Who looked for the world's long promised day,

And saw but the strife of Egypt's toil

With the desert's sands and the granite grey.

From the pyramid, temple, and treasured dead,

We vainly ask for her wisdom's plan;

They tell of the slave and tyrant's dread—

Yet there was hope when that day began.

The Chaldee came with his starry lore,

That built up Babylon's crown and creed;

And brick's were stamped on the Tigris' shore

With signs which our sages scarce can read.

From Ninus' Temple and Nimrod's Tower

The rule of the old East's empire spread

Unreasoning faith and unquestioned power

But still, is it come? the watcher said.

The light of the Persian's worshipped flame

O'er the ancient bondage its splendor threw;

And once on the west a sunrise came,

When Greece to her freedom's trust was true.

With dreams to the utmost ages dear,

With human gods and godlike men,

No marvel the far-off day seemed near.

To eyes that looked through her laurels then.

The Romans conquered and revelled, too,

Till honor and faith and power were gone,

And deeper old Europe's darkness grew

As wave after wave the Goth came on.

The gown was learning, the sword was law.

The people served in the oxen's stead,

But ever some gleam the watcher saw,

And evermore, is it come? they said.

Poet and Seer that question caught

Above the din of life's fears and frets;

It marched with letters—it toiled with thought

Through schools and creeds which the earth forgets,

And statesman trifle, and priests deceive,

And traders barter our world away;

Yet hearts to that golden promise cleave

And still, at times, is it come? they say.

The days of the nation bear no trace

Of all the sunshine so far foretold;

The cannon speaks in the teacher's place,

The age is weary with work and gold;

And high hopes wither and memories wane—

On hearths and altars the fires are dead;

But that brave faith hath not lived in vain;

And this is all that our watcher said.

—Portico.

What Rum did for Jack Bannock.

The man at the window is looking

out, his rough hair blowing over his

face. On a sudden he turns round,

and in a voice startles the landlord:

"I wish I was a boy agen!" The

sentence is garnished with an oath.

"What's the matter, Jack? What's

the matter now?"

"I say I wish I was a boy agen.

And so I do. Come here. I want

you. Come quick. You must."

The landlord leaves his paper with a sigh, and approaches the man at the window; wondering what queer turn has come over him now. He feels his arm grasped, and a hoarse voice speaks in his ear, while a big finger is pointing to the green, and a sodden face is worked up to a strange, unusual passion:

"Do you see them boys on the green? I was a boy once. I had as light a heart as any one of them. I could jump and run with the best of them. My eye was as bright as any lad's; and I was as happy as a boy could be. That's the same green as I played on. Them's the same trees I played under. They was standing then. They'll be standing when them same boys as is playing now are in their graves, and other boys be playing there. That green was there when I was a boy; and the grass was as long as it is now, and the daisies was as thick. When you and me be dead that grass will grow as beautiful. And what am I? A poor drunkard that—"

"O no, Jack. You're all right."

"Don't stop me. Don't stop me. I be a poor drunkard, and I know it. But what was I then? A brave, stout, bright boy. There! you see the lad yonder that runs faster than the others, and is stronger and quicker? When I was a boy I was like him. Everybody said Jack Bannock was a fine lad, and would do a credit to the village. And what credit has he done the village? Not a bit. He drinks worse and swears harder than any man in the parish, and his word goes for naught. He brawls and fights all the days of the week, and shuns the church on the Sabbath. There's no lass as will speak to him. There's no lass as will look upon him. But there was a time when I was thought better of. There's a true over yonder, an oak; you see it. That big one, all rough and gnarled like, with the broad branches. It was under that tree when the moon was shining one summer night—when the nights was sweeter than they be now—I told Mary I loved her, and she said she loved me. Yes, me, who now be feared and hated by all the folk around. I was a happy lad then; not even the Squire up at the big house when he brought home his young bride last Whitsuntide was more happy than me with my girl. She died. And then everybody said as how I was going to the devil. They said as how I was drinking and fighting; which was true. Some whispered as how I was a poacher. But it was only whispers. They never caught me. But the whisper was true. I was a poacher. I be a poacher. That's what I be now. And there was a time when no boy on the green was brighter and better and stronger than me. No boy has loved his parents more. And there was my poor mother, God rest her. If she'd been living now I should be an honest man, and getting her bread to eat in my tumble-down cottage. But she is dead. She lies under the sod yonder in the graveyard. And who let her die? The parish let her die. There's not even a stone to mark where she was buried. I've spent the money that I earned to give her a headstone, in drink, like a dog that I be. And was I ever a boy like them on the green? No, I cannot believe it. I could have had no comrades, no lass to love me! But I did, God help me. And she died. Do you see the blue river yonder? The Tamar? The beautiful water that I used to love more than the green land? No boy knew the channel better than I did. No boy could sail a boat on it better than I could, in rough or in calm. I used to know it from Sophill and Maristow down to the breakwater, and from Cathole down to Maker, better than any man in the place. I knew every cove, and every stream that ran into it. I used to row over

to Landulph at night-fall to hear the chimes of the bells. Do you think I'd care for the bells now? I used to swim in that river, mornings and when the moon was shining; and no lad better. Didn't I save a child from drowning when I was no more'n ten years old? And they say I never had a heart, and be a rough, swearing, godless man, and can't get any work to do, and that I'm a poacher. So I be, I own it. I'm not fit to live. God would be merciful to me if he killed me. I—"

And here the rough fellow broke down, hid his face in his hands, and would have cried like the boy he used to be, if a feeling of manhood had not restrained him. He only shook a little, and stood there, unwilling to look up and face the sunshine and the boys at play on the green, where once he was wont to play when the afternoons were as fair as this one was. The landlord could say nothing. A man of few words was he; quite unequal to the task of soothing the broken spirit of the poor wretch beside him. Not that he was indifferent. No; his stout chin trembled with emotion, and his lusty arm was about the shoulder of the other man. He looked out at the boys; then shifted his glance to the blue river away in the distance; but he could say nothing, and was silent. A linnet chirped as it lit on the sign; chirped, and a man's heart was nigh to breaking below. A fresh breeze swung the sign, and the bird flew away. The landlord felt he must say something; the bird had gone, and he had a clear field before him.

"Cheer up, Jack. Every cloud has a silver lining, they say. You'll soon be all right; never fret, man. You're only a little low. There's no reason why you shouldn't get work; and come here o' nights afterwards, and smoke your pipe, and drink your glass, and chat with the boys."

It was a tender chord at that moment to touch upon. God knows drinking for the future was furthest from the man's thoughts.

He raised his head with sudden energy, threw off the landlord's arm, and seized him by the collar, his face ablaze with passion.

"Drink my glass! Curse you! It is the drinking of that glass, your glass, sold in your house, sold by you, as has ruined me, and made me what I am. It it hadn't been for you and your drink I might ha' been an honest man now. And you talk to me o' drink when I be mad at the thought o' it. Curse you. Curse your drink." And with his whole strength he pushed the landlord from him, and ran out—*Sunday afternoon for April.*

The Story of an Apron.

And of all little aprons that hung upon the line that windy March day, Nainsook was the very proudest. She flaunted her ruffles, flung out her long ties, dipped, dived and soared higher into the breeze than any other.

And when Blue Gingham snapped against her she screamed:

"Keep away, Gingham; you'll leave a blue mark on me if you don't take care!"

"Don't be so proud, Nainsook; I'd rather be myself any day than a poor armless thing like you. It's Nellie and I that love fun. It's Nellie and I that play in the sand, and it's Nellie and I that make believe cookies out of flour, too. When she has you on, you are so stuck up and afraid your starch will get out, or ruffles unfluted, that she has to sit in chairs, and hardly dares wiggle her toes."

"H'm! Arms are very-unstylish for aprons, and I have ruffles instead. As to dirt, my taste don't run to playing in it, and when I come out of the drawer, Nellie is going to have company or go a-visiting."

"For my part," said the cambric with the pink buds, "I think Nellie and I have the best times. We are

together afternoons after she has been washed up. We play with our dolls then, or build block houses."

Then the plain white linen made some sensible remarks, the calicoes spoke, and the braided pique, but Nainsook said no more, for she was very busy.

Only think, she had got one clothes-pin off her shoulder? if she could only wrench free from the other, what a grand time! Away from those common aprons, whose company she hated to be seen in! Off with the breeze to find some little princess who would be glad to see her!

A jerk and she was free! Floating high for one glad moment, the next cast down into the muddy lane trampled upon by horses, nosed over by pigs, dirty and miserable.

At last a boy came along who fished her out on the end of a stick, and carried her home in that way.

"What yer got, Jim?" asked his mother.

"Er flag of liberty."

"Give her to me; she's an apurn an' will do for one of the gurls; pity she ain't got no sleeve."

So it came that one day, as Nellie and Blue Gingham were chasing down the lane after a stray kitten, they saw a ragged little girl playing in the mud, and on her, all dirty and forlorn, poor Nainsook.

"That's my apurn," cried Nellie.

"What'll you give for her?"

"What do you want?"

"Would rather have that purty blue one; this ain't got no arms."

Nellie thought a moment:

"Oh, no! if I give up my blue gingham I can't play out of doors, or in the kitchen, or have any more fun. I guess you may keep Nannie. Mamma had company yesterday, and I didn't have to be fixed up and sit still 'cause she was gone."

So Nellie and Blue Gingham ran on and poor Nainsook wished she had not been quite so nice or quite so proud.—*Youth's Companion.*

An Old Puzzle Re-written.

"If you please, sir, I'm a poor boy, but I'm awfully smart and I want to work."

The storekeeper looked at his customer in astonishment. The boy was a little bit of a fellow, and his chin came just over the top of the counter.

"Well," said the storekeeper, "you seem to have a pretty good idea of yourself."

"That's so," said the boy, "I lost my last place 'cause I was smart."

"All right, then, I'll show you where you make a great mistake, when you say you're smart. Do you see that jug over there?"

"No, sir," said the boy, looking hard at a box marked "Six gross safety pins."

"Not there; 'way back in the store."

"Oh, yes," said the boy.

"Now, that jug is full of vinegar; it holds eight quarts—I've an order for four quarts, but haven't any empty measures excepting one holding five quarts, and one holding three quarts. Now, if you're as smart as you say you are, perhaps you can measure the four quarts from the eight quarts by using the three and five."

"I can do it," said the boy. "Just as easy as fishing."

"If you do, I'll give two dollars a week and your clothes. No guessing, now, you must measure exactly."

"All right," said the boy; "have your tailor here in fifteen minutes to measure me, please."

The tailor might have come even earlier, as the boy had the four quarts of vinegar measured out in less than five minutes.

How did he do it?

[You must not use any other vessel than the jug and the measures, nor throw away any of the vinegar. We will give the answer somewhere on this page next week.]—*Standard.*

Send us a new subscriber.

Guides.

Leisure is sweet to those who have earned it, but burthensome to those who get it for nothing.

If you ever promise at all, take care, at least, that it be to nobody that may suffer by trusting you.

He who wishes to reap a harvest of the tears of sincerity, must first sow the true love in his bosom.

God accepts man's hearty desire, and the will instead of the deed, when they have not the power to fulfill it.

He that does good for good's sake, neither praise nor reward, though sure of both.

The Ninth Commandment.

"What is the ninth commandment?" said a teacher to a boy in a Sunday School.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

"What is bearing false witness against your neighbor?"

"It is telling a falsehood."

"That is partly true; and yet it is not exactly the right answer—because you may tell a falsehood about yourself."

Then turning to a very little girl she said:

"It is when nobody did anything and somebody went and told of it."

John Adams was short and stout, with a large head and commanding features. He was very particular about his dress and had his hair elaborately curled. He was a good horse-man, and rode in the saddle until well advanced in years. He was remarkable as an early riser, as a great smoker, and as a lover of cider. It was common with him to rise at three or four o'clock in the morning, and read, smoke and drink cider for one or two hours before the rest of the family was stirring. Perhaps this habit of cider-drinking stimulated his passionate disposition, which often led him to say and do extravagant things. His immobility and nervous strength was another peculiarity. He has been known to stand leaning upon his cane, for hours together, watching his men while they were laying a stone wall, for instance, as motionless as a statue, or as a scarecrow in a corn-field. This peculiarity was noticeable in his latest years, when he had long passed the age usually allotted to man.

A PROBLEM.—A young man distinguished for mathematical attainments, was fond of challenging his fellow-students to a trial in skill in solving difficult problems. One day a class-mate came into his study, and, laying a folded paper before him, said: "There is a problem I wish you would help me solve," and immediately left the room.

The paper was eagerly unfolded, and there, instead of a question in mathematics, were traced the lines: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

With a gesture of impatience he tore the paper to atoms, and turned again to his books. But in vain he tried to shake off the impressions of the solemn words he had read. The Holy Spirit pressed home his conviction of guilt and danger, so that he could find no peace, till he found it in believing in Jesus. He subsequently became a minister of the Gospel—he had once despised, and the first sermon was from the words, so eminently blessed to his own soul, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"—*American Messenger.*

"If you prosper, never tell your friends, because if you do, they will envy you; never relate your misfortunes, for if you do, your friends will laugh at you. Let every man keep his own counsel. In the language of the brusque Cromwell, in an address to his soldiers on the eve of battle, 'Trust in God, and keep your powder dry.'—*J. F. Rowe.*

Repentance begins in the humiliation of the heart, and ends in the reformation of the life.