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 PICTURESQUE NARRATIVES.
 

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## SABBATH AT ANNFIELD.

BY REV. T. B. BALCH.

THE writer is not without apprehension that his readers may tire of his reminiscences, expressed through the medium of the *Christian World*; if so, he should deeply regret having taken his pen to prolong these papers, and he promises to pause so soon as his friend Stockton shall give him a hint. These Narratives, to say the least, are intended to be innocent; and if they do no good, it is possible they may do no harm. They relate, for the most part, to secluded spots at which the writer has tarried, perhaps longer than usual, in consequence of his once feeble health. In one respect, and but one, they are like the poems of Cowper,—and that is, they are committed to *his* benediction,

“Whose frown can disappoint the proudest lay—  
Whose approbation—prosper even mine.”

Annfield is a large stone building, located in the county of Clarke, Virginia, and overlooks a manor broken up into hill and dale. The house occupies an elevation, and from the Portico there are many objects visible which lovers of the picturesque are prone to admire. It has been some time since we saw it, for it often happens that the places which know us to-day know us not to-morrow. The lady who once owned the establishment, departed this life some five or six years ago; but in the cloud of death, she very distinctly saw that sparkling Star of Bethlehem which challenged the admiration of Eastern sages, and about which Kirke White composed one of the best hymns in the English language. We do not mean to speak of Annfield as remarkable in the way of rural embellishment.—There are places which we have seen not inferior to the Leasowes which Dodsley has so minutely described, and where Shenstone lived; but Annfield was among dense woods and gray rocks, and distant mountain lines. We do not recollect ever noticing a lemon, or orange, or magnolia tree upon the lawn, or any root house, or artificial bower, or sylvan temple, or gravelled walk; but we have seen sheep rustling on the green, or reclining in the shade of the oak, or the locust. At the time to which we refer, Sir Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake* was popular, and the place might have brought up to a Celtic imagination, the castle of the highlands, celebrated in that work after allowing for a few points of discrepancy. Annfield had no lake—its mountains were not brown but perfectly blue, it was the seat of no feud, and the range of no game, and of course held no trophies of the fight or chase. What then can give it interest? Nothing but that it was the abode of piety; and if patriotism can sanctify the Plain of Marathon, or the rocks of Uri, religion may embalm dwellings, boudoirs and leafy groves, and endear them to the Christian, as Forest Hill is still beloved by the muses, and Gorhamby by the genius of philosophy, or as Thermopylæ still inspires the soldier. We pity the man who could not derive advantage from the Alpine dwelling of Oberlin—or the island rectory of Legh Richmond—or the cloud-wrapt home of Neff—or the citron orchard in which Henry Martyn died.

It may be asked how we came to spend a Sabbath at Annfield. Many

years since, we reached that place towards the close of the week, but intending fully to leave the next day. But over night an accident occurred to my horse by which he was seriously lamed. When brought out next morning he was unfit for use. The ostler or equery led him to and fro over the green, and my heart melted to see him limping, whilst his noble eye was rolling in a kind of orison, as if begging for repose.

“How did it happen?” said I to the ostler.

“Not by my carelessness,” replied the ostler, “but in a run with other horses he struck a gate post.”

“You can’t go,” said the Lady of the Manor.

“That’s pretty much my own opinion,” I replied, and poor Pilgrim was led away by his keeper to the shade of some ground oaks not far from the house. It was now ebb tide with my spirits, but as the next day was the Sabbath, it occurred that its hours might be spent quite as profitably on the west as on the east of the ridge. Let that season of rest find us where it may, we ought to pause and consider. Suppose it overtake us on the sea. Its hours may then pass as so many round isles of moral repose, in each of which devotion may crown an altar and bend its knee. Or suppose it reach us in a city. Then we ought to make one in the crowds that fill all its houses of worship, and partake in a unity as dense as that presented by some forest where each tree draws strength from trees contiguous. Or suppose we be detained, as was the writer, in the haven of a rural ocean, where the green waves were all lulled to rest and slumbering beneath the brows of the mountains, and a sky which seemed to lower its blue veil all round the amphitheatrical prospect. Then we may seek Him of whom a poet has thus written :

“Thou art, O Lord, the life and light  
Of all this wondrous world we see ;  
Its glow by day, its smile by night,  
Are but reflections caught from Thee.”

The lady who presided at Annfield was distinguished by benevolence of no common kind. That feature was as conspicuous in her character as the eye of her countenance, in the beams of which it was daily displayed to all with whom she was brought into association. It was her belief that selfishness is the root of misery, but that disinterestedness is the source of great happiness. We know of no book that would have fallen in with her views better than “Mammon,” written by Harris of Epsom, in Surrey-shire, England, though doubtless she would have taken exception to some of its statements. But in living for others, we live best for ourselves, was with her a most sacred principle. She not only believed this truth, but she inculcated it on all around. Conscious of acting upon it herself, she might well add precept to example. In this way some persons thought her peculiar and eccentric, but her eccentricity, it must be admitted, was of a rare kind, involving as it did no small amount of self denial and toil. We wish that such peculiarity were more in vogue at present. Her attire was plain, and yet if she had pleased she could have worn purple robes, or shawls from the looms of Cashmere, or a cross set in diamonds. The poor ye have always with you—but me you have not always. These words made a deep impression on her mind, and some thought her peculiar because she would not allow her children to torment insects, or because she felt for a crippled bird, or sought to restore the sparrow’s nest. And then some were not a little concerned that her equipage was not grander, and it is to

be feared they attributed to eccentricity that which was the effect of principle. It is true her carriage was not equal to the state vehicle of Queen Victoria; but then it was not intended for visits to Parliament, but to thread sylvan lanes, and wind among azure glades, and stop where its inmate might hear the moan of human distress. Very eccentric, indeed! Born to affluence, descended of distinguished ancestry, the occupant of a large landed estate, she voluntarily sought to be lowly. "What a rebuke to pomp and pride," she remarked once to me, "is in those words, 'The son of man has not where to lay his head.'" In short, her eye was not gazing and staring on present shadows; but it was on a luminous strain after the good of her species, and after objects beyond the curtain of time. We need not say that her demeanor was unpretending. Her eyelids often fell through diffidence, and she was always trying to be taught. She would propound a question, and then wait for all the light which could be given by the person to whom it was addressed. She at times wore to my imagination, the air of a nun, but she was one of the Protestant order. Her prayers were so numerous that they could not well be counted on the beads of a rosary, for they were dispersed over the halls of Annfield, and among the hovels of her tenantry. All the veil she ever took was that of a blue mountain, which shut her in from the world. But a panorama was visible from her cell, which nature has seldom spread out in other places. It was so undefined that the sight found gratification in height, depth, breadth and distance without end, except where the view was limited by mountains, and even they shewed pilgrim shepherds gliding with their flocks through the openings on the tide of tinted streams, and their misty wreaths. And then her cell was open at all times that the rites of hospitality might find egress and bring in the weary sojourner; and she was accessible to any who could add even the feeblest impulse to her footsteps as she toiled on her path to eternal life. Anxious she was to work whilst she could work.

"But do you think," said I, to her one day, "that there is any merit in good works?"

"Not the least particle," she replied, "but our Saviour brought down his great All to us, and we may well carry up our little all to Him in the way of effort for his blessed cause."

Acting on this principle, it may be said with truth in the words of Milton, that she filled

"Her odorous lamp with deeds of light."

On a Sabbath morning in the early part of May, the writer opened the window shutters of his room at Annfield which had been folded over night. In rising we could not help calling to mind the counsel of Hurdis—

Give to repose that solemn hour it claims,  
But from the forehead of the morning steal  
The sweet occasion;

and upon looking out, the fields were quite stocked with the yellowish cowslip and the pale primrose. The ploughs were in the fields, but without any horses attached. The sheep had begun to browse, and the sweet brier or eglantine had put forth its blossoms on the wall below. The stains about the sun were richer and more various than usual, and the whole appearance called to remembrance the Scottish Sabbath as drawn by Grahame. I don't exactly know what makes me like the sweet and calm verse of that poet in preference to the wild and startling notes of Byron.

Mine is not the taste of the present age, but I would not give Oliver Goldy's thousand lines, for the forty thousand written by the Newstead Lord. And yet we don't like every thing that comes either from Erin or Caledonia. We don't relish the Emerald Isle, the Irish Harp, or Dean Swift's effusions, or Hume's essays, or Brown's philosophy, or all of Christopher North's lucubrations. Christopher violates all the probabilities. He cannot surmount his proneness to exaggeration. His style is elaborate, and his incidents swollen into undue importance, and at times ludicrous even in the midst of solemnity. But occasionally he writes with Dante-like power, and in his Dying Elder he drove his arrow into the heart of Scottish nature. Had he always thus written, it would be folly in me either to applaud or condemn, as Johnson has said of Gray. We did not expect, however, to turn fault finder at the place of which we are writing. But at this moment we heard a bell, and it struck me as a summons to the domestic altar, and upon going down we found the *whole* family assembled.

"We want your help," said the Lady of the Manor, upon my entering the hall.

"It shall be given," I replied, "but it won't amount to a mite."

The remark, however, made me pray with a deep sense of unworthiness, and upon the family's dispersing after worship, we could not help wishing that Burns had written a Cotter's Sunday Morning as well as his Saturday Night. Prayer seems to be too serious a thing for most men: but Luther had to pray at Worms, and Washington at Germantown, and Franklin, half sceptic as he was, once proposed to send for the Congress Chaplain in a political emergency.

Time had not advanced many minutes after our early repast, before the Lady of the Manor appeared inclined to an interchange of thought. I asked her about what.

"Any thing," she replied, "that's lowly."

And this was just her peculiarity. She had humble views of her own attainments in piety. She could not rest satisfied until she felt the world to be small, and its robes of pomp nothing more than spiders' webs.

"Some persons," she remarked, "think the world to be as large as the sun, but grace can put us so far from it that we can look at it as an acorn or an orange."

We never heard her converse about Queen Elizabeth, or Windsor Castle, or about Catherine the Second and her ice palace, or Cleopatra and her barque; and we are sure if Die Vernon had ever leaped a five bar fence at Annfield, she would have thought that Die might have been better employed. If the great ones of the earth ever toiled for fame with her, they surely toiled in vain. About what then did she converse? We have but a mediocre talent for stating colloquies, but we can give a summary of what she talked about that Sabbath day. She had a good deal to say of the bread of life, and what our Saviour said of the water of life to the woman of Samaria. She loved that fourth chapter of John. The Saviour's arrival at the well—his weariness—his being on the search for sinners—his having nothing to draw with because of poverty—his tattered garb—his condescension to ignorance, all affected her very deeply.

"Let us compare," said I, "the account of the Evangelist, with what Dr. Edward Clarke of Cambridge says of the localities about Jacob's well." And so a comparison was instituted.

"Did you ever," said she, "see West's picture of our Saviour healing the sick in the temple? How it would please me to see it."

"Let us look," said I, "at the passage in Matthew on which it is founded." And so the passage was read.

"How it would delight me," said she, "to ride over Salisbury Plain."

"To see Stonehenge? I suppose."

"Something better than Stonehenge," she replied, "the hovel in which the shepherd lived of whom Hannah More writes. Tell me all you know of dear Sister Hannah? Don't criticise; but describe Barley Wood and the Mendip Hills, and Cheddar where she established schools for the blessed little children."

And they were described.

"And now say what you can about Olney and Weston where Cowper and good John Newton lived. How far apart. Their population—and I want to hear particularly about the Isle of Wight, where Legh Richmond lived."

This last inquiry led me to speak quite in detail about that favored speck in the English Channel, its pastoral interior and romantic outline, and the slopes of its inland hills and sea views, its castles and seats of the nobility.

"Don't mind the castles," said this good woman, "tell about Arretton, where the Dairyman's daughter lived; and about Brading, and Jane, the young cottager. When did Legh Richmond," she continued, "go to the Isle of Wight, and how long did he stay?"

"He went about 1797," I replied, "and left in 1805, and was subsequently rector of Turvey in Bedfordshire, from whence he took a tour over parts of Scotland."

"Did he write any thing but his tracts?"

"Nothing of much consequence," I rejoined, "but in them—

'The charms  
Of Richmond's mind are clearly seen,  
As flowers that deck the cottage green.'

The lady of whom we write, loved to talk of good people. She did not care where they lived, or whether they wore a plaid, turban, cloak or robe. It was enough for her to know that they were Christians, though no doubt she had her preferences. Thus she loved the memory of the Countess of Huntingdon—Lady Glenorchy—and Isabella Graham. And who does not, that's a Christian? She loved all the missionaries.

"Blessed men," she would say, "why don't more of them go to Africa? What's the population of Africa?"

"Probably, about ninety millions," I replied.

"And how many have received Christian light?"

"About two millions," I answered; "and some of them have heard of the Saviour only through the Prophet of Mecca."

Africa was a subject of which she never grew weary.

"Why were so many of her children brought here?"

"That's a problem," I answered, "which He alone can solve who allowed it to be constructed. It's mysterious why it was permitted, but in a million of years some reason may appear."

"But isn't slavery an evil?"

"So was the Fall," I replied, "but neither Joame Jenyns nor President Edwards could tell why it was permitted. It might be, however, that a good opposite to the evil may be introduced, and without the evil the good

could have had no meaning. It requires deep working in the ocean," I continued, "to line its beach with shells—and perhaps the millions that inhabit Africa, may one day come down to the shore of this great mystery, and carry rich gems and grottoes into the interior. This, at least, is my philosophy."

At the time of which we write, Liberia had been opened on the western coast of Africa, and she had fervently prayed long before, that the Divine hand might draw an outline on that continent which might be filled up by human disinterestedness. She subsequently sent her servants to the colony. She did n't think, nor do I, that colored people ought to be sent there without preparation: but when her's were prepared, she went out one day to the cabins and told them to hitch up the wagons. They stared, which was as much as to say, "What you mean—Annfield look so lonesome."

"Never mind the lonesomeness," she replied, "get ready;" and accordingly they went to work and mustered before her dwelling. She got into her old carriage and led the van, until she reached the river. She saw them across the ford, and then turned with a joyful heart to her silent home.

All this was thought very curious and romantic. That is, it was very curious to give up nearly all that one was worth, and to send away all the profitable, and to keep all the cripples, hump-backs, and grey-heads. Did n't this cap the climax of romance! Man, poor selfish creature, averted his eye, but the angels possibly turned down their's to look—and their's are much rounder than our's, and where we see an inch, they see a league. But here we must put in a word for the Lady of Annfield. She was n't remarkably imaginative. She never wrote any Tales or Poems. She did n't know the location of Mount Parnassus. She knew where Calvary stood, and Olivet, and the abode of Lazarus. Her judgment was sure to be the keystone of every arch reared by her fancy; and her imagination was nothing but the simple frontispiece to the volume of her practical life. The volume had some pictures, but let us turn them over and see of what they consist. There is the church which she frequented, not only when the roses were red, but when winter came, she muffled herself up to go. There is the Sunday School—the prisoner's cell—the sick room—the hovel of ignorance—the prayer meeting—family devotion—the company in which she is talking about tracts, and the cottage which Spanish Dons might pass by, but which she was fond to enter and speak—"Is any sick among you? let him pray; is any merry? let him sing psalms." In this way, far from the great world, she filled up her life usefully, and it is something to be a kind of moral shepherdess, even though the hills and dales over which her crook extend be located in the woods.

Thus far the day had passed off imperceptibly, and in fact the clock began to strike the approach of evening. The writer has always been addicted to sauntering about, whenever he can find sylvan premises; and at Annfield a lover of loneliness could not make a mistake. Woods and their Creator, were about all the company to be found there on Sunday, and my ramble commenced. Many men have desired to be alone. Did n't Sir Matthew Hale, Zimmerman, Kirke White, Edwards, Brainard, Henry Martyn, and scores beside? Company is irksome when the spirit is panting after seriousness; and this is a gay, but at the same time a serious, world. We had wandered a mile or two, and sat down, thinking of the octosyllabic lines of Sir Walter Scott—

This mossy rock, my friend, to me,  
Is worth gay chair and canopy;

and indeed we were giving them audible expression. The valley seemed to lose its green in the yellow which obtained the preponderance that evening. The sun formed on the steppes of a distant mountain, a sort of ladder, the rounds of which were composed of his beams. Just then a man and a boy turned the angle of an adjoining rock. The man was caparisoned just like an angler.

"You have been to the river," said I; "but why should you and your son be so employed on Sunday?"

"What 's the use," said he, "of keeping Sunday? Do the birds or sheep keep it?"

"But the birds and sheep don't read, yet we ought to read;" and so we had a long argument, at the conclusion of which the man remarked—

"My conscience tells me you are right," and he and the boy went on their way, and I back to the cawing rooks of Annfield. The moon at this time was visible, and her beams were beating against the windows and in the hall of the establishment; and without any artificial light we sung one of the hymns of Logan, and the family again fell down in worship. Thus ended the Sabbath of which we speak, and this is but a specimen of the way in which Sunday was always kept at that place.

Day sacred kept in Hebron's vales—  
In Carmel's heights—Engedi's caves—  
Nebniath's folds—in Sharon's dales—  
In Hermon's glens—by Jordan's waves.

This paper is short, for my general recollections of Annfield have been elsewhere given in a more extensive way. But it may be asked, did the excellent lady of whom we write, hold out to life's end in her peculiar modes and ways? She did, and her decease was not without a little tincture of sublimated eccentricity. She had a brother, who is mentioned in my paper called Nassau Hall. His Christian name was David—rather an old-fashioned name—but she never fancied novelties. David was taken ill at Benvenue, where he lived, and she got up her crazy vehicle, and when she reached his dwelling she made up his pillow, and read to him the Bible; and when he was buried, she returned home with a weeping heart. She was soon, however, to rejoin her brother, for she took to her couch—but she was not taken by surprise. Like Hooker, she had long been making up her last accounts. She had been a most profound student of the Scriptures. Like a hungry Jewess she had devoured their manna. What did she care for the necklace of Maria Antoinette—the pleasure boat of Queen Victoria—or the diamond of the Great Mogul, or any such vulgarities! But death comes for Christians, as well as for other people, and the pale horse was now ranging about Annfield, but she did n't mind his prancing. When her hour was come, her faith chained up the horse in the olive woods of Zion, but she bade his rider welcome, and Death entered. Now while Death was there, a thunder cloud came up into the zenith of Annfield, and she inquired what sound that was which she heard, and was told. "Then," said she, "it is the voice of my Abba." But the cloud passed off, and she turned and looked on the rainbow which succeeded. "Beautiful bow," she remarked—and her spirit darted through that gateway into the presence of her Redeemer. Her friends fell to weep-



ing when they ought to have gone to rejoicing, and Death unchained his steed; but where he went next it is not in my power to say.

Reader, was there any thing peculiar or eccentric in this kind of dying? If so, may heaven grant that your death and mine may be just as eccentric. If a bad man could say, "Let me die the death of the righteous," surely as much ought to be said by a good man; for "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Ringwood Cottage, Va. June 17, 1843.

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## EDITOR'S TABLE.

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### LITERARY NOTICES.

#### 1. BOOKS.

1. **ELEMENTS OF CONCHOLOGY:** Prepared for the use of Schools and Colleges, by W. S. W. Ruschenberger, M. D. Surgeon in the U. S. Navy, &c. From the text of Milne Edwards and Achille Comte, Professors, &c. With plates. Turner & Fisher; Publishers: 15 N. Sixth St. Philadelphia.

This is the fifth of the Series of First Books of Natural History, prepared by Dr. Ruschenberger, and so highly recommended by persons competent to form a correct opinion of their merits. It would be unbecoming in us to do more than announce its appearance—which, indeed, should have been done some time since—and direct attention to the place where it may be procured.

2. **THE KAREN APOSTLE:** or Memoir of Ko Thah-Byu, the first Karen Convert, with Notices concerning his Nation. By Rev. Francis Mason, Missionary to the Karens. First American Edition, Revised by H. J. Ripley, Professor in Newton Theological Seminary. Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln.

3. **THE MARRIAGE RING:** or, How to make Home Happy. From the Writings of John Angell James. Boston: Gould, Kendall & Lincoln.

The first named of these works appears to be a highly interesting illustration of the good results of Missionary labor, in heathendom; and the second, a charming exhibition of the domestic influence of our holy religion as in its own more proper bounds. They are neat publications; the latter more particularly so, being one of a series entitled *The Christian Miniature Library*, elegantly bound in cloth, with gilt edges, &c. They may be obtained in this city, at the Baptist Depository, No 21 South Fourth St.

4. **OUTLINES OF SACRED HISTORY;** From the Creation of the World to the Destruction of Jerusalem. With Questions for Examination. Intended for the Use of Schools and Families. New Edition, Enlarged and Improved. Illustrated with Thirty Engravings on Wood. Published in London, under the direction of the Committee of General Literature and Education, appointed by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Philadelphia: No 6 S. Fifth St. 1843.

THE title of this neat little volume is so comprehensive, and the sanction which it embodies, so respectable, that it is not necessary to say more of either its design or character. It is accompanied by a number of trust-worthy recommendations from Teachers and Clergymen, of our own and other cities; and furnishes, in a word, full assurance of adaptation to its object.

#### 2. MAGAZINES.

1. **THE YOUNG PREACHER'S HOMILETIC MAGAZINE,** and Repertory of Pastoral Theology. Vol. I. No. I. May, 1843. JOHN G. WILSON, Editor and Proprietor. Philadelphia, Printed and Published by Barrett & Jones, No. 33 Carter's Alley.

Here is another illustration of the increasing energy, enterprise and prosperity of the Mary-