Literary Notices.

BOOKS sent to us for Notice, will be duly attended to. Those from publishers in Philadelphia, New York, &c., may be left at our Philadelphia Office, 111 South 10th St., below Chestnut, in care of Joseph M. Wilson, Esq.

LOUISA VON PLETENHAUS. The Journal of a Poor Young Lady. Translated from the German. 18mo., pp. 233. New York: *C. S. Francis & Co.*, 554 Broadway. 1857.

This journal very delightfully illustrates the motto which is given on the title page, from Luther, viz.: "Earth has nothing more tender than a woman's heart, when it is the abode of piety." This is a really delightful little volume, and our readers must not be frightened from it by the announcement of its German parentage; for it is entirely free from all the misty dreaminess, the visionary indistinctness and unsubstantiality that usually characterize the effusions of the Teutonic mind. The reason is to be found in the fact that the book is saturated with Scriptural principles, and very clear exhibitions of the Gospel.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON, Compared with other parts of Scriptures. By *Adelaide L. Newton.* 18mo., pp. 316. New York: *Robert Carter & Brothers*, 530 Broadway. 1857.

Our readers will no doubt remember our notice of the life of Miss Newton, by the Rev. Mr. Bailie. In that profoundly spiritual biography, a reference was made to Miss Newton's notes on the Song of Solomon; and the favorable reception of "The Life," has encouraged the publishers to give this little work to the world. It displays a minute and accurate acquaintance with the Word of God, and shows very clearly that the emotional character of Miss Newton's mind eminently fitted her for the production of this work. The exposition is doctrinal and experimental, and every verse in the Song is opened up.

QUESTIONS adapted to Dr. Hodge's Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Prepared by the Author. 18mo., pp. 115. New York: *Robert Carter & Brothers.* 1857.

In this little volume, the text of the Epistle is given at the head of each page, and the questions are arranged at the bottom. Such a manual will help to test the attention with which the readers of the Commentary have studied it; and it will also enable the conductors of Bible Classes to use the book with profit in their prelections. Anything from Dr. Hodge needs no commendation.

Books just issued by our Board:

THE PRESBYTERIAN SOCIAL PSALMODIST. pp. —.

This is an abridgment of the Presbyterian Psalmodist, with a selection of hymns from the Assembly's Collection, adapted to the tunes here given. The book is designed for use in family worship, in the social prayer-meeting, and in the lecture-room. The Board have felt considerable difficulty in preparing this book, because of the various objects desiderated by parties who solicited its publication; but, in obedience to the recommendation of the last General Assembly, they have endeavored "to do what, in their judgment is best adapted to supply the wants of the Church." The shape of this volume is vastly better than that of the large work.

THE PRESBYTERIAN JUVENILE PSALMODIST. In *four* parts.

This juvenile work is now printed in four parts, and may be had for a few cents for each part; or the four may be had in one volume, as originally published by the Board. We think that the Board has now done nearly all that can be reasonably demanded in the matter of Psalmody.

APPLES OF GOLD; or, a Word in Season to Young Men and Women. By *Rev. Thomas Brooks*, author of the "Mute Christian," &c. 18mo., pp. —.

This is an admirable book for the young. It has all the strength and vigor of the old Puritanical writers, while the antiquated style of the author has been modernized, and errors of reference have also been removed.

The Bible.

Bible Narratives.—No. 35.

THE BLESSING.—GEN. XXVII: 1—40.

Joseph was born fourteen years after the events recorded in this chapter, (Gen. xxix: 27; xxx: 25;) he is thirty-nine years of age in the second famine year, (xli: 46,) at which time (xlvii: 9,) Jacob is one hundred and thirty years old. This would make Jacob seventy-seven years of age when he received his father's blessing. But allowing the birth of Joseph to be in the fifteenth year of Jacob's exile from Canaan, and that it was at the opening of the third famine year, or fortieth year of Joseph's life, that Jacob told his age to Pharaoh, we may, as we have in a former Narrative, count him seventy-five years old, when, by deceptious means, he obtained the blessing, which he was entitled to by purchase, and by appointment of God. Consequently Isaac would be in the one hundred and thirty-fifth year of his life.

As Rebekah is still an active, vigorous woman, as Isaac yet lived after this, forty-five years, and as in the second blessing, and in the rather trying events which followed the first one which he gave to Jacob, he showed none of the mental imbecility of early old age, we may with safety conclude that his dimness of vision was a special providence. It may have only lasted for a time, and may have been the effect of some severe illness which caused him to believe that his life was about to close. Christ affirms that a man whom he healed (John ix: 2,) was born blind, neither owing to his own or his parents' special sin, but that the works of God should be manifested in him; so might it be with the loss of vision to Isaac. Though the purchase of the birthright by Jacob seems to exhibit more of worldly policy than of brotherly affection, and though no plea that will stand the test of rigid examination can be offered for Rebekah and her favorite son, to obtain, by the means they used, from the blind father that which he intended for Esau; yet the result to which Isaac was blindly led, and the conviction that the end reached was right, notwithstanding such doubtful and unhallowed instrumentality, makes it more evident that Jacob, and not Esau, was the chosen of God, than if he had received the blessing; because the mother affirmed of him, as her favorite son, that before he knew good or evil, in a dream or vision, or by a voice, he was named of God as the successor of his father to the headship of the Abrahamic covenant.

Esau, at the request of his father, goes out to his accustomed hunting grounds to provide the game necessary for a feast. Whether he was away longer than a day, we are not informed. He may have gone some distance—perhaps to the native country of his wives, or to that of Ishmael, whose daughter he so soon after this took as a third wife. Near Beersheba it is not likely at this time the stag or fallow deer would be easily found.

The mother may, therefore, have full time to arrange and carry out her plans. Isaac seems to have advanced in greatness (Gen. xxvi: 19,) beyond that reached in the days of Abraham. Yet, a century and a half before this, (Gen. xiv: 14,) the camp or family of Abraham must have numbered thousands. We are not, therefore, to imagine that the feast was prepared, and the blessing pronounced, as in the quiet and seclusion of a single tent, with none to witness the solemn ceremony of a father delivering up to his son his prerogatives, as head and priest of his family, and as head of the covenant made with Abraham. The chief servants, at least those who desired that Jacob, rather than Esau, should succeed his father, as their temporal ruler and spiritual guide, might be present at the close, if not as witnesses of the whole scene.

Jacob at first thought the plan of his mother impolitic; but his mother's arguments, seconded by his own desire, led him to yield. Perhaps the current of feeling among the servants—some of them aged—being in the same direction, may have cast an additional weight into the balance. Without being fully satisfied of the justness of his claim, and of the probabilities of success, we cannot suppose that a man of Jacob's piety and wisdom would have taken a single step to deceive a father whom he respected.

The feast is now ready. The hands and neck of Jacob are carefully bound by his mother with the sparse-haired skins of the oriental kid. He is clothed with the sacerdotal robes of Esau. With them, as the eldest son, Esau had often appeared at the altar-worship, when the household met to call upon the name of the Lord. The haste of preparation, the changed voice, and the manner of address, led Isaac to suspect deception. But all the other circumstances so fully met what he required, that he ate of the provided repast, drank of the wine set before him, and pronounced the blessing upon Jacob which constituted him the bearer of the covenant privileges handed over to him by his father Abraham.

The blessing pronounced seems so general, that some have thought that it is given with suspicion that it falls not upon the proper head; but what more could be promised. There is given earthly abundance and earthly power, flowing from relationship and prevalency with a covenant God. This is all that has ever been guaranteed to the visible Church. She needs, besides the covenant relationship, and the spiritual blessings which are unseen, only an outward condition suited to her great mission for God and in the world. These blessings may be more amplified, as in their repetition, when Jacob is again in the presence of his father. But we believe that Isaac, and all who heard his words, understood them to mean all that was needful to constitute Jacob his rightful heir. If this were not the case, then Isaac would have been conscious that he had reserved a blessing suited to his former good opinions of his eldest son. Also, if Esau's confession that he had sold his birthright, and the other new light which was shed upon the whole train of events, had not convinced Isaac that the blessing was properly placed, though he might be wounded by the manner of attainment, he would have felt himself free to reverse it. But all the tears and entreaties of his most beloved son, fail to shake his purpose to carry out intelligently what he had ignorantly begun.

We are not disposed to place the general knowledge, the heart-felt piety, and the manly energy of Isaac, as low as some do. He would not be a type of Christ unless he were peaceful toward his enemies, forgiving in spirit toward those who injured him, and, as he could not look at the heart, ready to award the full meed of praise to every act that manifested a love for the God of his father, so up to the time he pronounced the blessing, he may have been blind as to the true character of his two sons. But now light breaks in upon his mind. Esau, thirty-five years before this, by his own confession, has so despised his birthright as to sell it for a mess of pottage. A privilege greater than to rule a nation, is bartered away for almost nothing; yet, since then, he is seen at the altar in the garments of the eldest son, as if he valued his right greatly. No confessions, no tears, no arguments could now convince Isaac that his eldest son looked beyond the outward and the temporal. These blessings, and these alone, as arranged in the providence of God, are, therefore, promised him. He has labored for these, and he has his reward.

Nor do we feel like writing such bitter words against Rebekah and Jacob, as have dropped from the pen of Cumming, and some others. The Bible does not say that they were guilty of "duplicity, falsehood, and the basest hypocrisy," neither should we. Paul has no difficulty in reconciling their conduct with great faith; (Rom. ix: 11; Heb. xi: 21,) we should find none. We know not how largely the purchase of the birthright, meeting the prior prediction to the same import, may have figured in the minds of both mother and son, in an age of substitution, (Gen. xv: 2; xxii: 2—13;) we ought not, therefore, to pronounce upon this case, as upon a similar one, without its concomitant events. Certainly no amount of criticism can fairly sever the connexion expressed by Paul, (Heb. xii: 16, 17,) and by Genesis, between the *sale* of the birthright and the *loss* of the blessing. In an effort to draw from this part of Bible history a truth which all grant to be plainly uttered elsewhere, (Rom. iii: 8,) we may not only do injustice to the character of those of whom God approves as his children, but we may lose sight of the great object, so far as we are concerned, for which this part of the history of the Church is written. Whoever lightly esteems the right of heirship, as a child of Abraham, then sells his right for earthly gain, and afterwards despises what he has bartered away, when he sees it possessed by another, has, like Esau, the heart of a murderer, (Gen. xxvii: 41,) and like the sinner against the Holy Ghost, the "enmity" of a devil; which, while it allows tears and anguish, admits not of repentance. If, however, the sinner has the desire and earnestness of Jacob, he will succeed, though God may not approve of all the means he has ignorantly or rashly employed.

G. W. S.

For the Young.

Now.

Children! large children and small children—children of the country and children of the town, will you listen to me a few moments? You all know how bad it is to *procrastinate*—that's a long word, but it means "to put off;" you all know that it is a great deal better to do to-day what ought to be done to-day, than to wait till to-morrow to do it. There is not one child out of a hundred, (who can read at all,) who has n't read:

"Procrastination is the thief of time."

And now there is one question that I want to ask, and you can each one answer it honestly to your own heart.

My dear, precious child, *why do you delay to give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ.*

You know it is your duty to give to him that warm little heart of yours, which he made for you, and keeps so carefully every single minute. You know you ought to love him who gave you all the power you have to love at all.

Then why do you not do it, and do it *now?*

You don't know how? "Ah! don't say that, my child. You know how to go and ask Jesus for a new heart; and if you ask in real earnest, and really wish to devote your young, happy days to his service; and to study, and to work, and to play, with his smile and his love always upon you, he will be sure to grant your request; and the way in which you can know that your prayer is heard, and that you are become one of Christ's little ones, will be, not perhaps by any unusual joyful feeling, but by one steady and never forgotten desire for the approval and love of God.

You may not have any of the wonderful feelings that you hear others speak of, but you will have a desire to please your Saviour in all you do; and as you grow in years and in grace, you will grow more and more into the likeness of the Master you so early chose; and in consequence, more like all true Christians.

Hasten, my dear children. "Now" is the day of salvation; to-morrow your body may lie cold, forsaken of your spirit, and then, Oh! I dare not think what then, if you delay to seek your Almighty Friend. Religion was never intended to make you less happy. Don't look at the people with long, sober faces and harsh stiff manners, and think that you must grow like them if you would please God. No, no, beloved ones, do you think the good God gave you all your quick, joyous, frolicksome spirits, only that you should cramp and dwarf them? He did not. He asks you not to yield any innocent pleasure, but only says tenderly: "Son, daughter, give me thy heart," and "Let little children come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Come children, *now.*

Too Big to Obey a Mother.

A boy "*too big to mind his mother?*" Such a boy must be larger than a giant, and one with strange ideas of the rights of big people. I should not like to live near him, or even see him, for I should expect he would feel "*too big*" to mind the laws of his country, or the laws of God, and thus be a dangerous neighbor. I am told that there are such boys, or rather those who think they are "too big to mind their mother."

What does your mother want you to do? To stay in evenings, to let tobacco alone, to avoid associating with bad boys, to read useful books, to shun novels and idle newspapers, to mind your studies or trade, or whatever you are engaged in on week days, with diligence, and on the Sabbath to be regular at church and Bible-class, and above all she wants to see you a faithful Christian boy. This you own would make her happy beyond description, and you feel "*too big*" to yield to her wishes.

My boy, believe me you are in a most dangerous state of mind, which makes me tremble for you, both for this world and the next. Think of Christ, the "King of kings, and Lord of lords." When he was old enough, and wise enough to confound the learned doctors in the temple at Jerusalem, he was none too old and wise to obey his mother; and when he was dying, he took care to provide her with a son to render her honor and affection.

Believe me, when you are small enough to depend upon your mother for your food, and clothing, and daily care, and while she is so anxious to see you grow up into a good and worthy man, and so willing to make any sacrifice to help you on in life, you should be ashamed to say, or even think, "I am too big to mind my mother."

Search all the biographies in your own or your father's library, and tell me if you can find a case of a man distinguished for greatness and goodness, who allowed such a thought to enter his mind. No; such men prize a good, watchful mother, obey her godly maxims as long as they live, and teach them to their children.

You are "too big" to *disobey your mother;* but do n't allow yourself, my dear boy, to become such a monster of iniquity as to be "*too big* to mind" a good mother.

—*American Messenger.*

BE thankful for past mercies, before you plead for new favors; this is the way to plead successfully; he that offereth praise, glorifieth God.

Agricultural.

Sources of Fertilization.

Extract from the Essay of Wilson Flagg, of Andover, which obtained a Premium offered by the Essex County Agricultural Society, at its last Anniversary, and published with the Transactions of the Society for 1856:—

The great bulk of every soil is a compound of earthly substances which are insoluble, and serve only as a bed to hold and secure the roots of plants, to protect them from heat, cold and dryness, and to afford a medium for the distribution of nutritious matters, in such proportions as are most healthful to vegetation. Every soil is capable of holding a certain quantity of moisture, without being wet. The water is thus held by a sort of chemical affinity, without a true chemical union, this affinity being so weak, as not to resist the action of the roots of a vigorous plant, and yet so firm, that it will not part with it to the atmosphere.

"A good vegetable earth," according to Berzelius, "is capable of holding about three-fourths of its own weight of water, without appearing wet; and like wood charcoal, condenses the moisture of the air." "It owes this property to the humin it contains, which is one of the most powerful hygrometric substances known. Mould can absorb double its own weight of water, without appearing wet; and after having been dried, it absorbs from the air, in less than twenty-four hours, a quantity of water, varying according to the state of the air, from eighty to one hundred per cent., of its own weight."

This fact may account for the thriftiness of vegetation during a drought, in certain soils which are apparently dry; and it will explain the necessity of supplying our crops with mould of greater depth than they would require in an ordinary, or wet season, to furnish them with a resource in a dry one. A considerable depth of loose and friable soil, containing a right proportion of humin, and other ingredients, would be capable of preserving its moisture, against the influence of evaporation and mechanical absorption, and during the severest drought, as fast as it is deprived of its moisture by the action of the roots of plants, would resupply itself with moisture from the atmosphere above, and the sub-soil below it, and hereby preserve, at all times, a sufficient quantity for the crops that grow upon it. This remark, however, must apply to those crops only, which allow a large proportion of the soil to be nakedly exposed to the atmosphere. On the principle above mentioned, we may in part, account for the ability of Indian corn to sustain drought. The mode in which it is cultivated allows a large surface of the soil to be exposed to the air, and to absorb its moisture. A grass crop is placed in directly opposite circumstances.

Sir Humphrey Davy remarks that "soils are most efficient in supplying the plant with moisture by *atmospheric absorption*, in which there is a due mixture of sand, finely divided clay and carbonate of lime, with some animal and vegetable matters; and which are so loose and light as to be freely permeable to the atmosphere." He adds that he has always found this absorbent power with respect to atmospheric moisture, the greatest in the most fertile soils. Hence it may be deduced, that one method of testing the quality of any soil, is to dry it perfectly, then weigh it; afterwards expose it to the atmosphere a certain length of time, and weigh it again. Unless it contain some deliquescent salts, the more weight it obtains by exposure to the atmosphere, the better its quality.

But a good soil will not only preseve a due quantity of moisture against the influence of evaporation; it also possesses, in a superior degree, the power preserving those substances from waste, when mixed with it, which are fitted for the nutrition of plants. "The soils which contain the most alumnia," according to Sir Humphrey Davy, "and carbonate of lime, are those which act with the greatest chemical energy in preserving manures." Such soils long preserve the vegetable and animal matter combined with them, and part with it only to the vegetative action of the roots of plants. Soils consisting of pure silecous sand, are the opposite of this, and quickly lose any nutritious matters which are combined with them.

Hence we may recognize two qualities as indispensable to the fertility of a soil—first, a *hygrometric* quality, or a power of attracting and retaining the moisture of the atmosphere; second, an *affinitive* quality, or a power of absorbing, fixing and retaining by chemical affinity, those matters that constitute the nutrition of plants, without liability to lose them or to part with them, by percolation, or evaporation. In order, therefore, to avail ourselves both of the moisture of the air, and of the fertilizing substances which may be placed upon the soil, mingled with it by human labor, or brought to it by spontaneous agents, it is necessary that it should possess certain chemical qualities, resulting from a certain combination of ingredients the most of which have been named above.

If a soil containing a just proportion of these hygrometric and affinitive ingredients, were overflowed by the fertilizing waters of a river, the nutritious matters held in these waters, would be absorbed and retained for the use of plants in the coming season. If the soil, on the other hand, be wanting in these ingredients, the fertilizing properities of any waters that overflowed it, would be retained only by mechanical obstruction to their progress, and every rain would carry off a portion of these fertilizing matters into the subsoil. Hence a soil already deep and rich, will gain more from the elements that pass over and percolate through it, and lose less, than a thin and meagre soil.

To illustrate this principle, take two pieces of dry sponge, free from foreign matters; then dip No. 1 into a solution of alum and carbonate of lime, and let No. 2 remain without any such application. Dry them thoroughly in an oven, and make the two when dried of equal weight. Then expose both of them, in the same place, to the outward atmosphere. In twenty-four hours or less, No. 1, which has been dipped into the solution of salts, will be found to have increased its weight in much greater degree than No. 2 by absorbing the moisture of the air. Let the experiment be reversed, by artificially moistening No. 2, until it has acquired an equal weight with No. 1; then expose each to a dry heat, and the former will be found to dry with greater rapidity than the latter, if the heat to which they are exposed be sufficiently moderate to allow the difference to be appreciated. In these experiments, No. 1 represents a good hygrometric soil, that readily acquires moisture by atmospheric absorption, and parts with it slowly and reluctantly. No. 2 represents a soil of an opposite character.

Let us make still another experiment with the sponges. Place each of the two, softened with moisture, over a phial containing volatile ammonia, and enclose each in a wooden box. After an hour or two, open each box; the box containing No. 2 will be full of the fumes of ammonia, while in the box containing No.1, it will be but slightly perceptible. The reason is that the chemical ingredients of No. 1 absorb and fix the fumes of the ammonia as they pass into the sponge, while No. 2 having no affinity for them, allows them freely to escape into the box. In this experiment No. 2 represents a good affinitive soil that readily appropriates all fertilizing matters in a liquid, or gaseous form, as they come in contact with it; while No. 2 represents a lean soil that appropriates and retains but a very small proportion of these matters.

To use a figure of speech, we might say that the more *capital* a soil possesses, in the shape of these *affinitive* and *hygrometric* ingredients, the more interest it will gain from all the fertilizing fluids and gases that come in contact with it. It may also be remarked, that when a soil is *leaky*, like the soil of some of our gravelly and sandy plains, this quality is owing, not so much as many suppose, to the draining, or leaky character of the foundation, or subsoil, as to the meagreness of the surface soil, which, if it was deep and fertile, would lose but little of its virtues by percolation into the gravel and sand underneath.

There is another important quality pertaining to soils, of which this Essay has not yet treated. Sir Humphrey Davy has shown by experiments, that different soils have a different capacity both for absorbing and retaining heat; but that their power of absorption is not always proportional to their power of retention. As a certain amount of heat is essential to enable the roots of plants to take up the nutritious properties of the soil, it may be said, that of any two soils, in other respects of equal fertility, the best of the two must be that which is the most retentive of heat. Little, however, can be done in relation to this quality by the Agriculturist, except to attend to the following circumstances. Other things being equal that soil will part with its heat the most rapidly, from which there is necessarily the most evaporation. Hence a soil of any certain quality, in a low, wet place, will lose its heat more rapidly than in a dry upland situation; and if it parts with its superfluous moisture by drainage, it will lose a smaller proportion of its heat than if it parts with the same superfluous moisture by evaporation. Hence a deep soil that has a good drainage, would not be made so cold by excessive rains, as the same would be made without drainage, when excessive rains must necessarily expose them to excessive evaporation. It is probably well understood that excessive rains do not cool the earth by the application of cold with their moisture, but by the excessive evaporation that always follows. Hence all soils that enjoy the advantage of a rapid and thorough drainage, on account of their friability, and the porous character of the subsoil, will retain their heat, in spite of excessive rains, which sink into the earth without increasing evaporation, except in a very trifling degree.

Another of the circumstances to be noted is, that a deep soil will retain its heat longer than a shallow soil, because it conducts the heat of the sun to a greater depth, and obtains proportionately a greater amount of it. But a soil containing a large proportion of mineral ingredients would both absorb heat, and part with it more rapidly, than a soil consisting of a large proportion of chaffy and undecomposed vegetable substances. The looseness of the latter causes it to be permeated by atmospheric air, and when once heated, therefore, it prevents the escape of heat from all below it, as a mass of wool, or sawdust would do.

To sum up all, it may be remarked in conclusion, that a perfect soil will possess the following qualities:—1. A sufficiency of bulk. 2. A sufficiency both of friability and firmness 3. A good hygrometric quality, and a strong affinity for those liquid and gaseous substances which nourish vegetation. 4. A sufficiency of nutritive ingredients, and a freedom from injurious properties. Having obtained our soil, we must next understand and use proper means for preserving its utility; the soil would otherwise soon lose all its power of sustaining productive crops. This leads to the second part of the present Essay, which considers the various means and sources of fertility.

Poetry.

The Wind and the Sun.

The Wind and the Sun disputed,
One chilly Autumnal day,
As they noticed a traveler wending,
Far over the common, his way,
Wrapt up in a cloak that shielded
His limbs from the early cold—
The Wind and Sun disputed
Which could loosen its ample fold.

The Wind, who was always a boaster,
Said *he* could succeed, he knew;
So he summon'd up all his forces,
And terrible blasts he blew;
But in vain were his angry strivings,
For the traveler, bowing politely,
Only hurried along the faster,
And grasp'd his cloak more tightly.

With a beautiful smile the Sunshine
Steps forward *her* skill to try;
And she offer'd her kindliest greeting
To the stranger passing by;
And her glance was so warm and winning
That he presently felt its charm,
And flinging aside his garment,
He threw it across his arm!

Now our story is but a fable;
But its moral is surely plain—
That not by *force*, but *persuasion*,
Our brother we strive to gain.
Cross words and unkind reproaches
Will never his heart unclose;
We must seek to persuade him gently,
Not harshly his way oppose.

Take "Love" for your constant motto,
And follow it out each day,
And cast upon all around you
A kind and cheerful ray:
For a great deal more good to others
Men might in our world have done,
If they rightly had learn'd the fable
We have told of the Wind and Sun.

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