

**THE PASSING BELL,  
AND OTHER POEMS**

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The Passing Bell, and Other Poems by John S. B. Monsell

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BY

THE REV. JOHN S. B. MONSELL, LL.D.

VICAR OF EGHAM, SURREY.



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1866.

ADC 5 608



TO

MY WIFE

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED.





## PREFACE.

**T**HE following poems are offered to the public in the humble hope that they may please and profit those who read them.

This is surely not too ambitious an expectation to be entertained by one who has been already kindly received in his efforts to do both. And who, though conscious that his verse falls far short of that high order of Divine Poesy after which his heart aspires, still must sing on to the end for the comfort of his own spirit, and would lose half the enjoyment of his song, if he did not feel that it bore its part, though an inferior one, in the great chorus of joyful praise, which daily gladdens earth, and deepens even the happiness of Heaven.

Surely the smaller birds of the grove are not to refrain from their warblings because they are not nightingales; and sweet as is their wondrous melody, is it not rare as well as sweet, and are there not long intervals which would be those of



utter silence in our woodlands, if we had not the residue of the year gladdened with less magnificent, though possibly not less truthful song? Every one, bird or human being, sings simply as his own nature enables him; the gladness of his heart, the tenderness of his love, the passionate overflowings of his soul, these he cannot restrain; and while their utterance relieves his own heart, other hearts are helped by such relieving.

If he be true to his native note, and simply earnest in his song, he has a right to sing, not merely in the hidden covert of the grove, but by the very highways of life, and let his song be heard by all who care to hear it.

With such apology for their appearance the following poems are sent into the world.

The "Passing Bell" is founded on the original beautiful, but, alas, by-gone usage of tolling the church bell at the time of a soul's departure, to ask for the passing spirit the benefit of Christian prayers. The object of this poem is to set forth, not only the spiritual consolations, which may gather round the parting soul when

"Prayers ascend

To Heav'n in troops at a good man's Passing Bell,"

but also the reflex good which its monitions may bring to those who, in the midst of the bustle and excitements of life, are thus reminded that death is near.

Each part of the poem refers to some special temptation, in the midst of which the warning voice is heard, and from the snares of which the yielding soul is to be gently drawn away :—the man of business from his unscrupulous pursuit of gain ;—the domestic man from the snare of a too easy and self-pleasing life ;—the young and giddy, but comparatively pure, from the frivolities and vanities of the world ;—the sinful from his stealthy and ensnaring schemes of wrong and ruin ;—the pastor from those habits of refined and literary luxury, which sometimes keep his hands smooth, and his feet back from the rougher ways of life, in which sinners are to be sought and saved. Even though we have lost in these latter days the tender usage of making this bell a blessing to the dying, its voice—still heard in every parish in England,—the announcement of a journey done,—may have on the hearts of the living that wholesome warning influence which this poem fondly gives it.

The “ Ode to the Nightingales ” is a much more real poem than most persons would imagine. No words could describe the sense of loss which has been felt in the unaccountable absence of these sweet birds from their accustomed haunts in the vicarage grounds for the last two years. Half the beauty of each Spring vanished with them. Every word therefore in the Ode is true to the feelings which dictated it, as if it were mourning a deeper loss. May it not be that vanished joys and parted

pleasures of a far closer kind had so interwoven themselves into the delightsomeness of those songs of the night, that the memories of which we may speak, are but the shadows of other memories we dare not touch upon ?

The "Silver Wedding Day" (a name given of old to the twenty-fifth anniversary) is a memorial of domestic happiness erected by the wayside of life, when more than half its journey had been accomplished. If any think it too private a matter for public gaze, let them remember it is a portrait hung up to do justice to the original, and gladden others ; as well as drawn to gratify oneself :— a portrait which he who drew it is not sorry to leave behind him for those who in after-years will reverence it with childlike affection ; and in which many in our dear domestic land will recognize a strong family likeness, as if it had been sat for in their own happy homes.

The lesser poems tell their own tale, this only does the Author claim for all, as, in his estimation, their chief value—they are real ; they tell what he feels, not what he merely fancies.

Egham Vicarage, Surrey.

Easter, 1868.