

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

The World for Sale.

BY RALPH HOYT.

The world for sale!—Hang out the sign,
Call every traveller here to me;
Who'll buy this brave estate of mine,
And set me from earth's bondage free?
'Tis going!—yes, I mean to fling
The bauble from my soul away;
I'll sell it, whatso'er it bring,
The world at auction here to-day!

It is a glorious thing to see;
Ah, it has cheated me so sore!
It is not what it seems to be:
For sale! It shall be mine no more;
Come, turn it o'er and view it well;
I would not have you purchase dear,
'Tis going—going! I must sell!
Who bids? Who'll buy the Splendid Tear?

Here's Wealth in glittering heaps of gold,
Who bids? but let me tell you fair,
A baser lot was never sold;
Who'll buy the heavy heaps of care?
And here, spread out in broad domain,
A goodly landscape all may trace;
Hall, cottage, tree, field, hill and plain;
Who'll buy himself a Burial Place?

Here's Love, the dreamy potent spell
That beauty flings around the heart?
I know its power, alas, too well!
'Tis going! Love and I must part!
Must part! What can I more with Love?
All over the enchanter's reign?
Who'll buy the plumeless dying dove,
An hour of Bliss—an age of Pain?

And Friendship—rarest gem of earth,
(Who o'er hath found the jewel his?)
Fragile, fickle, false, and little worth,
Who bids for Friendship—as it is?
'Tis going!—going! Hear the call;
Once, twice, and thrice! 'Tis very low!
'Twas once my hope, my stay, my all,
But now the broken staff must go!

Ambition, Fashion, Show, and Pride—
I part from all forever now;
Grief, in an overwhelming tide,
Has taught my heart to bow,
Poor heart! distracted, ah, so long,
And still its aching throbs to bear;
How broken, that was once so strong;
How heavy, once so free from care.

No more for me life's fitful dream;
Bright vision, vanishing away!
My bark requires a deeper stream;
My sinking soul a surer stay.
By death, stern sheriff! all bereft,
I weep, yet humbly kiss the rod;
The best of all I still have left—
MY FAITH, MY BIBLE, AND MY GOD!

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

The lost Moment.

"We have no time to sport away the hours,
All should be earnest in a world like ours."

It was the close of a brief Sabbath; the sun-set glory rested full upon lake and forest that lay peacefully around the quiet Cottage of Mary L., as Edith Milton paused for a moment on the neatly swept door-stone to admire the scene of beauty stretched around her. A smile, that might have told the observer of "a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience," rested on her features, as she exclaimed joyously. "My Father made them all." Edith was a Christian, as every woman who rightly fills the station her Creator has assigned her, must be. She was but a young Christian; having, only a few weeks previous, found that peace which passeth knowledge. With a heart deeply conscious of the solemn duties that rested on her as a representative of the religion of Jesus, she had sought Mary L. or Aunt Mary as she was familiarly called, whose affectionate and well-timed counsels had, as often as she had sought them, strengthened and refreshed her in her new career. Mary L. belonged to that exceedingly limited class of Christians who live up to—and some discerning persons thought she even went beyond what a religious profession required; one of the few, who as they travel on through life seem to leave a shining track behind them; and many, by life's wayside had taken knowledge of her that she had been with Jesus. As Edith entered, she raised her eyes

from a well-worn Family Bible, and welcomed her affectionately. Edith drew a seat near her friend, and talked long and earnestly of the pleasures that were to be found in the religion of Jesus, and of the new aim that had been given her for the duties of life.

God grant that it may ever be so with you dear Edith, said her friend, her eyes filling with tears, resting her hand caressingly on her head; may your heart never feel less of the love of Jesus, or your sympathies be shrouded in the cares of the world; and never dear Edith, rest in the past in your religious experience; think with gratitude and encouragement of the past, but ever live in the present, and strive each day to do something for the honor of God, and the good of souls; by such means the most common life may be ennobled, and the thousand daily cares endured, which, to many, are more difficult to bear with Christian patience, than greater afflictions, that seem to be laid on them more directly by Providence, but which often prove like the little "Foxes that spoil the vines"; but by casting all our care on him and striving to do all to the glory of God, life may be made almost a thing sublime. Neglect not daily duties or daily blessings will not follow.

That reminds me, said Edith, of the particular object of my visit to you this evening; there is a duty that rests with great weight on my mind, and which seems particularly hard for me to perform, that of speaking personally to those around me on the subject of religion. I feel the importance of it more and more every day, and why it is such a trial I cannot tell. I have in vain tried to reason myself out of the thought that it was merely my duty; I have said to myself, have I not by a public profession plainly shewn to them my preference? "Have they not Moses and the prophets, let them hear them?" is not the gospel sounded in their ears continually by ministers? but ah, I cannot rid myself of the thought that we each and all have a duty to perform; that the duty of pressing gospel invitations does not devolve entirely and alone on Christian Ministers, for "let him that heareth say come" is ever present to my thoughts; and now dear Aunt she continued, earnestly and with fast falling tears, I know all this, but lack the strength to perform; and I came to night purposely to speak with you on the subject. It always seems so easy for you to introduce the subject of religion so kindly, so earnestly, and yet so affectionately, that none take offence; tell me how it is? was it always so, or was it ever a trial?

Edith had spoken so earnestly, that she scarcely observed the bowed head of her friend, until she was startled by a sob so full of pain, that she exclaimed, oh! what is it, what have I done to distress you? Slowly she raised her head, and an involuntary exclamation of surprise burst from Edith, as she saw the change, that brief storm of agony had left upon the face that a moment before had looked upon her with all the placid, smiling loveliness of a summer landscape. She saw that deep and painful feelings were stirred, but with true delicacy forbore to question her farther, thinking that a chord whose vibrations were so painful, it were cruel to keep in motion. Mary L. fully understood the motives of her friend, in not pressing her to disclose the cause of her emotion, and while she felt grateful for it, she told her that painful as the subject was, she nevertheless felt it to be her duty to relate a circumstance, the memory of which had caused her such grief.

Nothing, dear Edith, but the hope that it may be useful to you, in urging you to a discharge of your duty, would tempt me to revert to the subject.

It was long ago, dear Edith, when I was about your own age, and, like yourself, just setting out in the Christian life. When I look back and consider how weak I was then, how often I stumbled in a plain path, and how few have been my efforts since for the promotion of the cause that has been my salvation, I wonder at the mercy and goodness of God that has ever surrounded me.

The circumstance of which I am about to speak, taught me a lesson that I never in my after life forgot. You are aware that my childhood and early life were passed in the pleasant village of C—. I will pass over many recollections that the memory of those days call up. My grandfather, with whom I resided, was, as you know, a clergyman of the

Episcopal church, a good man, possessed of deep piety; and though I think it was a source of considerable grief to him when I, who had always been a favorite, embraced the Baptist faith, or, as he called it, one of the numerous schisms of the day, which he considered as so much defrauded from the church he loved; yet he was a man of a generous mind, and not sufficiently sectarian to make it a matter of difficulty between us; and thinking the grace of God in the heart, of more importance than sect or denomination, the matter was allowed quietly to rest, each worshipping God according to the dictates of their own conscience. But to return to my story; among my grandfather's parishioners was a family of considerable affluence, of the name of Leighton. The family consisted of a mother and three children,—two sisters, with an elder brother. They were gay, worldly people, with whom I had been on terms of intimacy previous to my profession of religion; after which, I plainly saw through all their perfectly well-bred politeness, that they considered me a decided fanatic. They were themselves extremely pious persons on Sundays; making it a point of conscience to go regularly to church, fashionably dressed, to kneel on velvet cushions, pronounce emphatic responses, thus doing up their religion for the coming week in the most refined manner possible.

One day as I accompanied my grandfather to his church, I observed in company with them a strange lady, whom I afterwards learned to be a sister of Mr. Leighton, and of whom I had frequently heard them speak. I have seen many forms of female loveliness, but never any that excelled Laura Leighton. She was tall, and finely formed, with an air of extreme dignity, yet not amounting to pride. The turning colour on her cheek might at first have been mistaken for the flush of health, but at times it paled, and then the shadow of death was plainly visible on that marble face, and her large dark eye glowed with a light that only the torch of death can kindle. She remained in C— for some months, during which time I frequently met her, and learned something of her history. She had been in ill health for some years; and though to others it was evident that consumption was doing its fatal work,—slowly it might be, but not the less surely,—yet she still flattered herself with hopes of recovery. She made no pretensions to religion, not even the Sabbath religion of her relatives, for she seldom attended church. After her death I learned that she had once been greatly aroused, and anxiety for her soul had taken entire possession of her mind; but distressed friends had urged upon her, that she was only required to live a good moral life, that all her fears were groundless, and hurried her back to the scenes of fashionable festivity, of which she was the acknowledged ornament; and so she had settled down into a state of stoical coldness, paying scarcely sufficient respect to the forms of religion as her relatives thought, to appear respectable; for a little in this enlightened age is necessary to respectability; perhaps she despised the form without the spirit. The latest fashion in every article of dress received the minutest attention, and the perfect propriety of her conduct was such, that the most malicious could find no fault; yet no interest in religion was ever manifest. She avoided all conversation on the subject, and such was the dignity of her manners, that it was extremely difficult to approach her on a disagreeable subject.

And my grandfather, after several ineffectual efforts to converse with her on the subject, was coldly, though politely refused. When urging her attendance at Divine Worship, she said, "it is perfectly useless, Sir; I have sat for years under the best preaching, have listened to the most earnest appeals, but nothing moves me. I acknowledge the truth of all you say; I do not justify myself; but nothing moves me." Ah! Edith, how I agonised, and prayed, and thought of that girl, and vowed time after time to break down the barrier of reserve between us, and speak earnestly to her of the love of Jesus; could I have met her privately when rising from my knees, with a heart full of the thoughts of her, it might be that I would have performed my vows; but no such opportunity offered. I was waiting for Providence to remove all

difficulties, instead of removing them myself, and bitterly did I suffer for my sin. I met her only in the interchange of formal visits,—and it is a comment on our system of religious society, that the drawing room is so seldom made the scene of religious conversation, that it seems impossible to introduce it there.

She was several years my senior, and awed by her dignity, I tried to find excuse for my neglect. At last an opportunity offered, that I could find no excuse for neglecting. One evening I called at the Leightons, and found Laura the only occupant of the drawing room. I enquired affectionately after her health; she was unusually miserable, and spoke with more feeling of her ill health than I had ever seen her display. "Oh, Miss L.—," said she, "my life is a perfect weariness; I am deprived of all that makes life bearable; my hopes blasted, and there seems nothing on the wide earth that can afford me happiness." Her eyes filled with tears as she spoke. My own heart was full; I longed, ah how I longed, to beseech her to seek happiness where alone it could be found,—to go to Him of whose love none can weary, who offers hopes of happiness that grow brighter as earth's shadows gather darkness. I had almost spoken, but the family were in the next room; her hearing had become affected, so that I should have to raise my voice sufficiently loud for them all to hear, had I done so. Each moment I waited it became more difficult, till at length the family entered, and the opportunity, the last I ever had, passed away forever. And, Edith, I cannot tell you the distress I suffered, the self-reproach. The voice of God seemed to say, "could you not have done that much for me, for all the love that I have given?" And there are moments yet when I fear, that sin will follow me, unpardoned, and left C— for the benefit she hoped to find in travel.

I never saw her again until the following summer, when she returned to die. I had tried to satisfy my conscience by praying earnestly for her, and hoping, that knowing her situation as she must, she would seek preparation for death; but such had not been the case. What had passed in her own mind none knew. When hearing of her arrival and extreme prostration, I hastened to visit her, thinking then, at the eleventh hour, to do what should have been done long ere that hour came. I found it too late. She was speechless; yet if ever I looked on a face that expressed mental suffering, it was hers. Her cheeks were sunken, and her form attenuated to the last degree; and her eyes,—ah! the expression of those once beautiful eyes will haunt me till my dying day,—they were clouded and dim, and as the light shone full upon them, they returned a dull hopeless glare, as I have seen the moonlight fall upon dark turbid waters, without the power to penetrate to their depths. They told me that when she first returned, she had requested my grandfather to be sent for, and shewed great distress in prospect of death, which she was at last convinced must come; but he was absent from home; and to a Christian friend who spoke to her of preparation for death, she said it was too late. "Once," said she, "once it might have been," and those words which sum up the most of human misery, were the last she uttered. Those who stood beside her, during her prolonged struggle with death, said that the scene was distressing beyond measure. Although she was beyond the power of speech, yet the moan of distress, the agonised start, told plainly of mental as well as physical suffering, and that once proudly beautiful form lay silent and cold, the eye of beauty dimmed forever; those hands that had moved so restlessly around her dying couch, as though conscious that she was venturing her frail bark upon the waters of an unknown sea without compass or chart, lay nervelessly at her side. And thus she died in a land of gospel light, leaving no ray of light around her tomb; and thus thousands die, leaving the only true object for which life was given to be hastily settled, just as the life-boat is leaving the wharf of time; but the mournful "too late, too late," rings out; the boat is off; whither! ah, whither?

I cannot tell you what I suffered, yet I can tell you with truth that when I stood beside her grave, and heard the solemn words, "dus-