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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger

"Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given me."

Tossed on the boisterous sea of life,
We've walked together mid toil and strife
Oft by many a tempest driven,
We, with the children Thou hast given.

Yet ours has been a happy lot,
For we were to our Saviour brought:
Our sins were all by Thee forgiven
We, with the children Thou hast given.

And in all times of woe or pain
We've called on Thee in vain,
For Thou hast heard our prayer in Heaven:
We, with the children Thou hast given.

But time; what monstrous changes wrought
To them its numerous cares have brought,
And they about the world are driven,
We from the children Thou hast given.

This is the way of all in life
Oh! what a world of busy strife;
'Tis just the way that we have striven,
We, with the children Thou hast given.

But now this world has lost its hold,
For we are growing frail and old,
Soon we'll be called from earth to Heaven,
And leave the children Thou hast given.

But we'll all meet, on that bright shore,
For some have passed along before;
Ere long we'll say to thee in Heaven,
Lord we and the children Thou hast given.

A. K.

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE PRESENT LIFE.

The present Life! a dream, a bubble floating on the broad expanse of time! a shadow stretching far out from the beginning of its untrodden journey to the infinite beyond, to the unknown Eternity; definable only, when the present has faded in the earnest of the future.

In the beginning of time, when first from the veiled recesses of the sanctuary where even the immaculate purity of Gabriel enters with awe; the decree went forth to create man in the likeness of Jehovah. Humanity stood up with the impress of immortality on its brow, and claimed alliance with the first begotten of Heaven. The white wings of the Heaven-commissioned made music in the bowers of earth. The harps of the angelic myriads gave back the echo of the pealing song of thanksgiving that continually ascended to the all-powerful Creator and the archangels' mighty trump reverberated through the stary atmosphere of the Invisible Glory, to the ravished ears of the newly created. The Present Life was but the extension and reflection of the all glorious eternity. But from the dark caverns of the bottomless pit the fallen apostate (that once on celestial battle ground warred with the armies of the Highest) beheld the creation of God; and the path of eternal ruin to the soul of Man echoed from the blazing vaults of the lost, up to the foot of the throne of God. The tempter went forth to wrest the seal of holiness from the brow of humanity. Man, infatuated man, blindly gave the hand of innocence and purity to the instigator of folly and crime, and the Present Life became the theatre of mortality, the scene of degradation and crime. But the wail of woe from the heart of a ruined world was heard by the hosts of the All Powerful; and a million harps waited the petition of love from a million thrones of stars to the ears of creative Eternity. The decree went forth—the promise was given, and in the fulness of time the hand of the "All Power" was stretched forth to redeem and save.

Omnipotence veiled in humanity descended from the great white throne—to die!—Eloi! Eloi! Lama Sabaothana! rang out from Calvary's shuddering summit, and the seal of redemption was wrought out by the suffering victim of Jehovah's wrath. Mortality saw

within its reach the earnest of a future glory. The Present life became the scene of high and holy aspirations, the school from which mortality, rising ever onward and upward shall at last reach the glory of a perfect Eternity.

And now, (though yet through the world still trembling beneath its fearful apostasy), the tempter goes forth unweariedly binding the chains of folly and sin around erring souls that madly look with careless eye upon the offered blessing; though sin stands up with unblushing brow and blindly bids defiance to Omnipotent power. Yet all is not lost; and Man, redeemed by the blood of the Cross, raises the pure eye of a living faith above the veil of unbelief, to the very face of immaculate Purity; and with feet firmly placed upon the rock of strength, stands up in all the sublimity of the present Life, in all the grandeur of the soul approaching in close proximity to the Infinite.

The human soul gazing upon time beneath the broad light of the revelation of Jehovah, trembles with its fearful responsibilities; then humbly placing its hand in that of the glorious "All Power" goes forth under the shield of Omnipotence, fearless of evil, in the strength of the true and mysterious life of humanity united by the blood of the Cross to Divinity itself.

Rising ever onward, ever upward, gazing ever deeper, the soul beholds the shadow of the Present brightening beneath the light of Immortality; the bubble of time laden with the hopes and aspirations of Eternity floating on and on, fading, disappearing, melting into the bright elements of the broad ocean of immortal glory. The Present life becomes the battle field to which the warrior, strong in hope, goes forth to victory; the victory of the Divine Life over the Eternal Death. No longer on idle dream it rises sublime in all the high and holy purpose for which it came forth from the hand of God. Firmly gathering in the tried and tempted Present the earnest of the glorious future, the soul rises in all the grandeur of moral power far above the trifling allurements of a fallen world, onward, upward, until it comes into the presence of the Holiest and kneels in lowly reverence before the great white throne. Passing, rapidly passing, on and on, through life's troubled journey, guided by the power of the inner strength, unbinding, one by one, the chains of the tempter; the fleeting drama of the present, presents the charter of freedom from the bondage of sin, elevating humanity to its original purity, exalting it not only to the height from which it had fallen, but the Present Life sanctified by the mysterious presence of the Incarnate God, exalts humanity in unity with him who is the Alpha and Omega; the Beginning and the End!

The Present Life! sublime mysterious beginning of the indefinable unending Eternity! Who shall weigh thy hidden strength? Who shall comprehend thy high and holy purpose, or scan the majestic measurement of the shadow stretching for beyond the verge of the finite? Who shall foretell the future glory to be gathered from the earnest fulfilment of the Present; or alas; what tongue describe the mighty anguish of the Future gazing back upon the unredeemed, unhallowed Present?

When from the indescribable effulgence of the cloud-covered temple of the Heavenly Glory the Ancient of days comes forth in judgement; when the great White Throne is set, when the dead small and great with all the nations of earth assemble to be judged according to the deeds of the Present; then shall the dream fade away beneath the mighty awakening, the shadow disappear beneath the majestic substance; then, and not till then, shall humanity brightening into immortality comprehend the mighty power, the sublime purpose, the grand and glorious results of the Present Life!

THALIA.

VOWS.

Unless vows reform the heart and life, of what value are they? Their formation is comparatively easy. Under great distress induced by severe mental or bodily anguish, under the solemn feelings inspired by the recurrence of the new year or some other morally suggestive occasion, the heart instin-

tively tries for relief in promises of amendment. Nothing is more natural. The vital and difficult matter is the subsequent resumption and fulfilment of these vows, when the pressure under which they were made is removed. The mere sorrow which is the immediate cause of a vow cannot be depended upon as a certain proof of the genuineness of the motives with which it was uttered. At the first glance, nothing seems easier of analysis than the feelings. Yet nothing is more complex, nothing more delicate and subtle than the flow of sensibilities. The moral cause of emotion is as frequently mistaken by its subject as the cause of bodily sickness is by the patient. The physician comes and locates the seat of the pain in quite a different part. A man may assert, in great suffering or danger, that he is sorry for his sins—that he has such views of Divine goodness and justice that he will, upon deliverance for ever abandon them and seek the attainment of holiness as the only worthy end of life, when all the while has heart smarts simply for the consequences of his sins, their fearful retribution which stares him in the face. He does not mean to deceive himself or his Maker. He imagines that there is a sort of virtue in a vow to appease the Divine displeasure. It is hard for the heart, especially the unrenewed heart, ever to forget that God is not like man, to be bought off with a price. Could the feelings be invariably relied on, then would we see that all praying sinners in times of adversity become living saints in times of prosperity. But, alas! this is not the rule. Where one is thus reformed it is the exception. Unless the sorrow which originates a vow subsequently embodies itself in willing and doing, how utterly empty! Here lies one of the darkest features of death-bed repentances. He who repents not till there is no possibility of recovery, cannot have the proof to his own heart of the thorough honesty of his penitence which is afforded by the voluntary choice of holiness when there is neither a moral or physical necessity instantly laid upon him to choose it. He cannot leave to his friends such proof. When we see so few show evidence of repentance upon restoration, may we not well tremble for the genuineness of the repentance of those who die? Hence it is not uncommon for those who do recover, and who do not reform, to attribute their vows, uttered most solemnly, to extreme agitation of mind, to exhaustion of body, or to the wish to quiet fears of anxious friends.

But look further into the causes of the volatility of religious vows. How is it that promises made with most serious intent are so entirely disregarded? The mind, when the weight of trouble is removed, is more at liberty to take in the full measure of the responsibilities and trials of a religious life. In its anxiety to do anything, accept any conditions to escape a present distress, the soul will sometimes fail to weigh the obligations it is very ready to assume; and hence, when the load is removed and the intellect can fairly review the whole ground, can impartially estimate the claims of holiness, the self-denials connected with it, the heart shudders at the extent of its pledges, and the man is terrified at the promise which has gone out of his mouth.

Severe sickness tends greatly to weaken those bodily powers in the healthful motion of which sin finds its occasion. Consequently, as these recover their tone with convalescence, temptations again arise and oppose as obstinately as heretofore the struggle for a new heart and life. Disease may so far affect the system—piercing the flesh with fiery arrows, breaking the bones with pain, and turning all moisture of the secretions into the drought of summer—as that those sins which consist in the indulgence of the senses may lose all their control over the person. There may be no appetite for anything, no craving for sin. In such a condition a vow may be easily formed, and there may be no apparent reason why it may not be as easily kept upon recovery. But with recovery comes the revival of those functions upon which the exercise of the senses depends, and lo! it is as hard to keep the body under as previously. Thus the drunkard goes back from the gates of death to his cups, the libertine from the brink of the grave to his licentiousness.

"It was the old weak tale
Which time has told from Adam till this hour—
The slave comes back, taking up his broken chain.

Beyond doubt much that passes for a moral change in wasted men is simply a forced submission to virtue, because there is no longer capacity for vice.

There, too, are those affections which have their seat in the mind, as distinct from the body, but the temptation to the gratification of which is usually feebleness under trouble than under ordinary circumstances. The love of gain, ambition, and pride, are examples. One who has an inordinate love of gold, when sick and threatened with death, may feel how empty are worldly goods. He may feel their attraction for him gone, and under the diminished force may resolve to consecrate himself and his wealth to God, and that he never will again be close and niggardly; but, to his surprise and the surprise of every one, upon getting up and out again he finds the same old acquisitiveness sticking to him, to which it is much more congenial to yield than to keep his vows. The ambitious man stands in the bed-chamber of a dying wife or child. As the dear one who has absorbed his tenderest and deepest affections draws him near her, asks for the last fond kiss, speaks the last accents of triumph, and points the attenuated finger to glory, oh how all his visions of worldly greatness dissolve! How little the nearness of eternity renders all worldly greatness! What is life, honour, power? No; he has been wrong. He will address himself to nobler ends. Heaven alone is worth his aspiration and toils. There is something in the presence of a great sorrow which temporarily, at least, sublimates human nature from its grossness, and lifts even a base man into a purer atmosphere, where, comparatively freed from sordid selfishness, he can discern and receive the light of truth. But the scene passed, the sorrow is healed, the mind again engrossed, and the stimulus to virtue is gone. With its loss the vow is buried till another grave opens.—*Christian Cabinet.*

Sudden Death, Sudden Glory.

The Rev. Mr. Hall, of Arnsby, (father of the celebrated Robert Hall), Mr. Evans, of Foxton, and Mr. Christian, of Sheephead, three eminently pious ministers of the Gospel, attended a ministers' meeting at Mr. Woodman's, Sutton-in-the-Elms, Leicestershire. The day was solemn, and the discourses delivered were very interesting and appropriate. In the evening these ministers spent their time together in the most agreeable conversation.

Among other subjects one of them proposed for discussion that passage in Job iv, 23: "If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent." Deep seriousness pervaded the conversation, while each minister gave his thoughts on the text. When it came to Mr. Christian's turn to speak he dwelt on the subject with an unusual degree of feeling. He considered it as referring to the sudden death of the righteous, and was expatiating very largely on the desirableness of such an event, and the happy surprise with which it would be attended, when, amid a flood of rapturous tears, he took his flight from the world while the words were yet faltering on his tongue.

Edmeston, the poet, wrote the following beautiful lines on this solemn event:

Which is the happiest death to die?
"Oh," said one, "if I might choose,
Long at the gates of bliss would I lie,
And feast my spirit, ere it fly,
With bright celestial views.
Mine were a lingering death without pain,
A death which all might love to see;
And mark how bright and sweet would be
The victory I should gain!

"Fain would I catch a hymn of love
From the angel harps that ring above,
And sing it, as my parting breath
Quiver'd and expired in death:
So that those on earth might hear
The harp-notes of another sphere,
And mark, when nature faints and dies,
What springs of heavenly life arise;
And gather, from the death they view,
A ray of hope to light them through,
When they shall be departing too."

"No," said another, "so not I;
Sudden as thought is the death I would die;
I would suddenly lay my shackles by;
Nor bear a single glance at parting,
Nor see the tear of sorrow starting,
Nor hear the quivering lips that bless me,