

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

AUTUMN.

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Gather in the golden sheaves;
Husband ev'ry precious grain,
For the dreary wind and rain
Soon will sound 'mong Autumn leaves.

Leaves of richly tinted hue,
Let us gather ere they fall;
And to dust returneth all—
The beautiful, the good, the true.

Emblems some of pangs endured,
Hope near lost and light obscured;
Watched for night—but God sent day,
Brighter now from suff'ring they:

Others who have stood the breeze
Wind and rain or chilling frost;
(Firm, tho' ev'ry hope were crossed,
Mighty forest giants these!

Others still—the largest part,
Touched with sorrow's varied shade;
Weak and worn and sore afraid—
God to thee speaks, poor lone heart.

Earth to thee can never yield
From care release; from sin a shield,
One alone can make thee blest
To thy way-worth soul bring rest.

As from ev'ry leaf that dies
Comes new life to every tree;
So with us Lord may it be,
Till we reach yon azure skies.
Autumn, 1864.

Religious.

"BEAUTIFUL FOR EVER."

God has made everything beautiful. The mere inert world of matter is arranged into forms intended to awaken admiration. Its hills and valleys, mountains and plains, lakes and rivers, sunny nooks and sheltered dingles, present a thousand features on which the eye rests with a sense of joy and rapture. Nor is the old earth ever left without a suit of apparel more or less gay and lovely. Robed in ever-varying herbage, plumed with trees, crowned with flowers, she is the delight of all her children, many of whom are never tired of admiring her beauties. Animal forms and colours present charms of a still higher order. Numberless insects, birds, fishes, beasts, and reptiles, exhibit graces of mould, line, and motion, on which none can look without pleasure and wonder. Have you ever looked into the eye of a gnat through a microscope? If so, you have discovered a world of beauty in that little globule. Or have you examined the plumage on a butterfly's wing through the same medium? Can he be indifferent to the beautiful who has lavished so much of it on this tiny and frail creature, and on the untold millions of its race, and of other races? Nay, when there seem to be exceptions to this great law in the animal world, those exceptions will be found, on closer inspection, to be more apparent than real. In the forms which offend or even disgust the prejudiced and uninitiated, the naturalist does not fail to perceive much to detain and fascinate him. But of all animals, MAN was intended to be the most perfect and the most beautiful. Good indeed the creation was, and was felt and pronounced to be by the Creator, without him; but with him it awoke a deeper satisfaction, and received a richer and grander benediction, as "very good." Our first parents, as they came from their Maker's hands, were perfect in constitution, structure, and symmetry. Milton portrays them in language which none will accuse of exaggeration:

"In their looks divine,
The image of their glorious Maker shone—
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure.

For contemplation he and valour formed;
For softness she, and sweet attractive grace;
He for God only, she for God in him:
His fair large front and eye sublime declared
Absolute rule; and hyacinthine locks
Round from his parted forelock manly hung

Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad
She, as a veil, down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevel'd, but in wanton ringlets waved,
As the vine curls her tendrils."

"Paradise Lost," b. iv.

And again, for the great poet is never tired of painting this primitive beauty—

"Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye.
In every gesture dignity and love."
Ibid., b. viii.

Of all the beauties of the human form, those assembled on the countenance were no doubt originally the most perfect. His brow, where holy thought was ever to have sat majestic; his eye, formed to drink in and reflect the light of heaven; his mouth, speaking words of grace and wisdom, inviting and returning love; the whole ensemble of his features proclaimed this last child of dust as the most complete and wonderful of all God's works on earth. Nor are we even yet left without some faint reminiscences of his pristine state. In a few rare instances we have beauties as if they came fresh from Paradise still. The "human face divine" has occasionally some touches of its old grandeur and of its old loveliness in it; while memories of the early creation, consciously or unconsciously, continue to visit the human heart in that warm love of the beautiful which seems to be an innate principal of our nature, and which a little cultivation seldom fails to evoke.

It was sin that spoiled the world, but chiefly the world of men. Every defect in the human form has its counterpart and its cause in the human spirit. We were all bruised, injured, and marred in Adam when he fell. The human face especially has never ceased to exhibit the degradation and the anguish of that hour. The body is little more than a casket; it is the man within that gives it the character it bears. Satan, envious of a beauty which he himself had lost, struck to the ground this handiwork of God, and it rose up the poor impotent maimed thing we see it now. Every defect in man's frame, whether seen in others or felt in ourselves, should raise our resentment against the author of the fall. And let the man, with his crushed heart, go up to God in cries of pain and sorrow for that healing balm which, by bringing him inward restoration, can build up his broken form strong and fair, perfect and beautiful, even as it was at the beginning.

For RELIGION is intended to make mankind beautiful again. Its office is to restore and renovate from its foundations this ruined temple of the Divinity. The counterwork of infernal malice, it is destined to undo all the mischief which that malice has inflicted on our nature. Beginning with the spiritual, it goes on to involve the physical, and ends with the physical, parts of our constitution. And although each part of this great work may have its own moment of commencement and completion, yet the whole process goes on simultaneously, and the new expression and the altered countenance not seldom bear witness to the renewed heart. Nor should this work be retarded even in its external manifestations. People need not be afraid of being too good-looking. Let others see the Christ in their faces and in their characters, and they will not fail to see something to love. It is too bad to expect love without trying to merit it; and yet those who merit it least are often the first to grumble that so little of it falls to their share. There are faces, it must be confessed, which make unconscionable demands on human charity. The wonder is, that they have power to move it at all. It is most true that the eye sees in an object what it brings with it the power to see; and this must account for it that superlatively kind natures see something to love in all. In many cases, however, it can only be the love of pity; admiration must be altogether out of the question. Do you want to be commiserated? Then make your face very sour and very long, and your object is gained, so far as your pious friends are concerned. But if you want something more than commiseration, get sufficient alkali to neutralise the vinegar, and a little gratitude and cheerfulness, or sometimes even a good hearty laugh, to diminish the dreary distance between your forehead and your chin.

Good Christians should improve their faces—there can be no doubt about that. Many

of them have at first (indeed, some of them all through) little more than the rudiments—the mere raw material, as one may say—of a good face. Poor things! Some of their number not only remind you of the old peasantry about grace grafted on a crab-tree, but make you suspect that crabs and verjuice must enter largely into their diet every day. Far for ever be it from us to regard with anything but tenderness the countenance which has been disfigured by hardship or marred by grief. It is the expression of discontentment, bad temper, low passions, and hardness of heart, against which our feelings rise in rebellion; and we feel it almost like a wrong when we are expected to pay the homage of admiration to faces marked by any of these. The only way of improvement in such cases is to improve the character, when all the rest will follow as a matter of course. Extract the acid from the heart and the wormwood from the temper, then neither of them will be seen in the eye or on the lips.

Whatever may be their peculiarities, there are some things that are always beautiful in men. Intelligence is one of them. Not the fancied wisdom which makes them pert and conceited—this is always repulsive, and is very much in the line of being puppyish; but real intelligence,—the waking up of the intellectual life of the man, revealing itself more or less in every expression of his face. The plainest countenance is beautiful in the light thus given to it; and this is a method of improvement open to us all. It requires neither great learning nor elaborate culture; what it does require is a mind open to attract and prompt to reflect whatever light may visit its sphere. Dulness and stupidity are forms of repulsion for which little excuse can be pleaded, and on account of which, at any rate in our day, few would be entitled to appeal to our sympathy. Persistent ignorance, where there are so many inducements to seek information, will be found in most cases to be a fault of the individual rather than a misfortune incident to his position in life.

Another step in the direction will be found in the proper government of the passions, and the due control of the heart. Few things revolt us more in the countenances of men than pride, resentment, anger, and sensuality. These, or either of them, may be in never so small a degree, and yet they will betray themselves; and they are real deformities to whatever extent they may exist. All infants are beautiful, and that chiefly because they have no bad passions to express. Unsoured by contact with the world, they find ready admission to almost every heart. Yet it must be confessed that their attractions are more passive than active in their character, and, therefore, lacking in those grander qualities which grow out of successful conflict with evil. It is not baby beauty that we look for in our young men and maidens, but the beauty of a harmonious development, in which the appetites, the affections, and the temper are subject to an enlightened and conscientious will. If many of our pretty young ladies knew how much they spoil their beauty by haughtiness, pertness, pettishness, and wilfulness, to say nothing of more vicious propensities, they would no sooner willingly indulge in any of them than they would wash their faces with vitriol, or perfume themselves with assafoetida.

Then, benevolence and virtue are amongst beautifiers of the human face. Selfishness, malignity, and animalism degrade and distort the finest features, rendering countenances otherwise handsome, disagreeable and repellant. Who of us are not acquainted with persons admired by all at first, but who have never had power to attract the lasting affection of a single human heart? On the other hand, are there not others whom we have passed by with indifference on a slight acquaintance, but for whom subsequent intercourse has awakened the liveliest regard? The truth seems to be, that no one is wholly indifferent to beauty of character; and beauty of character will go far towards making everything beautiful. It is better than rouge or ribbons; it is better than washes and powder, and all the appliances of the toilet table. Let our fair readers take our word for it. This is the best cosmetic. "Beautiful for ever," the dream of human vanity, becomes a fact and a reality to

those who, like the King's daughter, seek to grow beautiful from within.

But the crowning resource of real loveliness remains yet to be signalled; it will be found in the enjoyment and practice of true piety. Religion is a divinely-constructed mould, in which to recast and perfectly remodel the character of its friends. All that is monstrous and excrescent it undertakes to uproot and expel from our nature, while it restores it to perfect health and faultless proportions, and covers it with the sweetness and the bloom of immaculate and immortal beauty. For this it has come to us furnished with all possible provisions. Not only does it drive the Author of all Evil from the heart, and purge it of all the defilement which he has brought with him and left there, but it commences and carries on a "new creation," which is never left till it is left finished and complete. We naturally take the character of those with whom we have most to do. Persons much together become like each other, not only in manners, but in features. And this is especially the case with the more dependent and flexible, when they are much in the society of stronger, more plastic and commanding spirits. The one is giving off and communicating a power which the other receives and appropriates. And this way we were intended to be affected by Divine objects, but preeminently by contact with the Saviour Himself. "All we beholding with unveiled face, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." That is the grand process. There is no other way of getting rid of our deformity and repulsiveness. Would that every reader would consider it! Would that our younger readers especially would consider it! The knowledge of Christ,—love and obedience to Christ,—above all, fellowship with Christ,—the conscious union and communion of our spirits with His,—that is the golden way in which to acquire all that is noble in character and all that is faultless in beauty, and not only to acquire them, but to retain them for ever. For this reconstitution of the mind is only preparatory to the reconstitution of the body. Christ is the model of both. We are to be made like Him in character now, in order that we might be made like Him in person at the resurrection. "For as we have borne the image of the earthy (i. e., of the earthy Adam), so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (i. e., of the heavenly Adam). The grave is to be the mother of a new generation, and all her children are to bear the perfect image of their Lord. The glory of the first creation shall be eclipsed and forgotten in the greater glory of the second. Sown in corruption, dishonour, and weakness, but raised in power, glory, and immortality, behold them prepared for the heavenly Bridegroom, and worthy of His everlasting embrace! How many of them lay down there withered and shrivelled by age, or deformed and wasted by suffering, or crippled and dismembered by violence; but they spring forth from the embraces of the kindly sepulchre purged of all their infirmities, fair as the fairest of the Creator's works. Let the admirers of personal beauty reflect on this. Do they wish to possess its attractions, and to enjoy the admiration and the love which it never fails to excite? This is the only way in which fully to gratify the wish. By union with Him who is chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely, let them secure moral and spiritual excellence now, then they will rise from their graves at the Great Day, replete with every grace, faultless in every feature, lovely as the brightest angel; each different from the rest, yet each without a defect! all perfect in beauty, and all BEAUTIFUL FOR EVER.

CHRISTIAN WORK.—The reason why the christian is not to be taken from the world, is, because society could not exist without him. The christian is to remain in the world, not so much for his own good, as for the good of others. "It is true that the world is a school of discipline for the christian. Here he walks by faith, and learns obedience and resignation in the school of affliction. Every christian brother and sister has a work assigned him or her, and a mission to perform as truly as the Son of God had, however exalted or humble their stations. If you are a child of God, you have a work to do.