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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger  
Life.

What is our life? Is it the little space  
Between our cradle and the hour to die,  
In which we think, act, work, and fill the  
place,  
Designed by Heaven that we should  
occupy?

The canvas on which we unconscious trace  
The scenes that we enact day after day,  
Which time makes the first to us seem faint,  
Or wholly faded past recall away?

Ah! life is more; when first we draw our  
breath  
Our life's begun. The end shall never be;  
The soul's companion, here, must suffer death,  
Only to put on immortality.

This life's the vestibule where we may  
choose  
The door that leads to gloom or opens to  
day;  
The battle-field where we may win or lose  
A glorious crown that fadeth not away.

Death is the last scene painted on time's  
page.  
And then the veil is taken from our eyes;  
Probation o'er, ended earth's pilgrimage,  
Life closeth not,—the spirit never dies.

E. E. C.

## Religious.

Fashionable Life.

A SERMON DELIVERED BY REV. G. W. M'CREE, ON SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 18, IN BROUGH ROAD BAPTIST CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, LONDON.

"The fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii. 31.

We should have great sympathy with the gay temper and innocent pleasures of the young. We should not frown upon pleasant laughter and harmless games. We should promote the sweetness and charming elegancies of life. But this is a different thing altogether from conformity to "the fashion of this world." And I need not hesitate to say that a fashionable life cannot be a Christian life. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." This is decisive. It is the verdict of eternal truth, and there is no higher court to which you can carry your appeal.

In my picture of a fashionable life, I desire to be true, generous, and large-hearted; but I do desire, at the same time, to speak without fear.

A fashionable life, then, is wrong in its very foundations. A true, and noble, and religious life has its source in God. It is built alone upon His grace and love. It is moulded according to His commandments. Its pattern is Divine. But one who leads a fashionable life looks to the world, and the world alone, for its laws, impulses, customs, delights, and rewards. God is not in the thoughts of the votaries of fashion. Their questions are these:—"What does the world say? What does the world expect? How does the world eat, drink, and dress? What amusement does the world love? Where does the world go?" The higher questions—"What is true? What is of good report? What is innocent? What is best for society? What will make humanity better or happier? What will wipe away falling tears and heal broken hearts? What will make my life useful and blessed?"—these questions are never asked. Fashionable life, therefore, is wrong at its very foundations. It knows nothing of God.

It is also mistaken in its objects. Any one who ardently pursues a fashionable life has certain objects in view. What are they? Chiefly these—admiration, flattery, riches, pleasure, elevation in society, a splendid marriage, intimacy with gay circles, titles and honours, and the pride of life. Usefulness—the grandest thing in any man or woman's career—usefulness is never thought of. Look at Elizabeth Fry with her scarlet boots and shining silks, when following the fashion of this world, and Elizabeth Fry, in Quakeress garb, in Newgate Prison, seeking the reformation of the vilest women in all London, and

you will see the difference between the butterflies of fashionable life and the great souls who remember that—

This world is full of beauty  
As other worlds above,  
And if we did our duty  
It would be full of love.

Yes, let that word duty take the place of the lower word fashion, and the whole aspect of society would be changed, and ignorance, crime, and sorrow would vanish before the sweet ministry of women who are now a vain show, and the deeds of men whose lives are now wasted and forlorn.

You will find that a fashionable life is also erroneous in its laws of action. Consider for a moment, is there a God? Is He a lawgiver? Are we His creatures? Will He be our judge? If so, then most clearly life should be in harmony with the will and Word of God. Some words like these should be present with us:—"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage;" "Thou art my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep thy words;" "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments;" "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path;" "Make thy face to shine upon Thy servants, and teach me Thy statutes." But those who pursue a fashionable life, whether men or women, never hide such holy words in their hearts. The laws of this world are the only laws they know and love; and what cruel, base, frivolous, bad laws they are! They once insisted on duels, and even shot at each other like targets. They prescribed two, three, or four bottles of wine at dinner, and lords and ladies were drunken every night. They now commend French plays with foul plots, midnight dances in hot rooms until morning dawns, costumes for maids and matrons which make modest men blush, extravagant dinners and balls which lead to embezzlement, and fraud, and bankruptcy, mercenary marriages for the sake of titles, lands, and gold, where love is unknown, and other follies and vices which degrade and ruin their poor, fluttering, foolish victims for time and for eternity.

And see how a fashionable life tends to ignore all the higher laws of God. Take war, for instance. How eagerly fashionable society applaud war! Its cruelty, its debasement, its awful horrors, its infinite destructiveness are nothing to them. Let the Prince Imperial go to kill Zulul with whom he, at least, could have no quarrel, and fall ignobly in a bloody scuffle, and the fashionable world goes into mourning for him, and demands that he shall have a monument in Westminster Abbey; but for the ten thousand Zulul who fell in battle they have not a tear. Yet they were men, and brave men too.

A Government may be false, cowardly, extravagant, corrupt, deceptive, and ruinous; but if it is "aristocratic," if it scatters titles and pensions, if it provides balls and battles for fools and fighters, then it is a great Government. Of its injustice, its wastefulness, its mendacity, and its opposition to all legislative progress, the fashionable world said nothing. Why should it? It only worships the god of this world.

But, surely, justice, righteousness, peace, and freedom are greater than all things. Surely wars and theatres, balls and banquets, horse racing and billiards, royal reviews and military honours, are not more glorious than humanity, virtue and truth. Surely a ploughman who prepares a field for the golden harvest is a more worthy toiler than the soldier who burns the sheaves of corn to ashes. Surely a Band of Hope conductor who trains children in the way of temperance is a more useful member of society than a comic singer who pollutes the ears of young men and women with lewd and stupid songs. Surely a Christian church with its solemn worship, its benevolent efforts, and its holy living, does more for the greatness of England than all the theatres that ever were built. And, surely, men and women—immortal beings as they are—should sometimes remember that the law of God is the ultimate law of life. This goes to the root of the matter. Let

the Law of God guide us in business, in pleasure, in diet, in costume, in amusements, in creed, in worship, in life, and in death, and we shall be blessed as individuals, happy as families, and great in national glory; but let the fashion of this world be our god, and nothing can prevent our utter and shameful ruin.

None ever think of what life might be without feeling how mean and poor a fashionable life is. Here, taken from the twenty-ninth chapter of the Book of Job, is a picture of a really beautiful life. "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of Him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was as a robe and a diadem." How different this from the levity, the self-indulgence, the wine-drinking, the revelling, the idleness, the glittering show, and the gilded vice of fashionable life.

The personal associations of such fashionable life, are not unworthy of serious thought. I will select only one feature of it. I refer to the theatre. I am not going to dilate on the morality or immorality of plays. My purpose at present is more simple than that. As I pass along some of our crowded thoroughfares, I see shop windows filled with the photographs of popular actresses. A glance at them show a number of low-browed, strangely-attired, voluptuous women in unwomanly attitudes, and I am told that these women are popular actresses in London theatres. These? And are these the women who are to delight us, to hold up to us the mirror of life—these women whose astounding costumes, immodest attitudes, and leering eyes, I see represented in those photographs! These the teachers and models of the daughters we cherish, and the sweet little girls we tenderly love! Surely not. The theatre never did promote human virtue, goodness, and moral exaltation; and if these women are the goddesses of fashionable life, then I do not wonder at the scandals and sins of Vanity Fair. Imperial Rome fell when it became corrupt—let Great Britain take heed and repent. Wealth, power, and pleasure are all lawful and right, but when public amusements lower the tone of public life, and women of vile name are crowned with flowers and pearls of price, then the doom of society is not far distant, and a revolution of fire and blood may be the due punishment of our deeds. Say not this cannot be. It has been so in Paris more than once. It has been so in Greece, and Rome, and Jerusalem, and Nineveh, and Babylon, and it may be so in London. Hear ye the lamentation over Babylon, the Great. "Alas! alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stones of pearls. For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster and all the company in ships and sailors and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas! alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour she is made desolate!" Such is the lesson and lamentation of history, and it will be well for us if we do not treat it as an idle tale.

The awful evanescence of this world should not escape our solemn consideration. Not many days ago I was far away from London on the King's business which required haste. A friend said to me, "Come and see our old oak before you go." So we went up the village, and through the churchyard, until on one of its green borders we found a mighty oak, forty feet in girth, and a thousand years old. There were its great bosses polished by old men and children, and lads and lasses sitting often in the sun. A thousand years ago an acorn fell in-

to the ground here, and lo! this venerable giant was born. And since then, what changes have come and gone! Kingdoms, armies, peoples, and thrones have vanished like the golden mist of morning, and still—"the fashion of this world passeth away." Only God—the living God—abideth the same. A thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Oh! happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God. For He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation." Oh! let your souls find peace and life in His holy service, and care not for the fashion of this world.

But, you say, "I am not willing to be singular, and therefore I conform in most things to the fashion of this world." Singular! Well, do not be afraid of a word. I do not wish you to be coarse, or rude, or absurd, or untimely, or inhospitable, or eccentric. Let sweetness and grace, manliness and womanliness, sincerity and truth, liberality and courage, beauty and strength be found in all your words and deeds. Be a true man. Be a perfect woman. Be a brave youth. Be a charming girl. But do not fear to stand apart from the slavery, the snobbishness, the emptiness, the fickleness, the extravagance, and the debasement associated with the fashion of this world. Singular! Are you afraid of that? Listen to these sacred words: "We ought to obey God rather than men." "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." "Ye should turn from these vanities to serve the living God." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Singular!

They are slaves who fear to speak  
For the fallen and the weak;  
They are slaves who will not choose  
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse  
Rather than in silence shrink  
For the truth they needs must think;  
They are slaves who dare not be  
In the right with two or three.

Remember that society never has been and never can be purified, and that the redemption of humanity never can be accomplished by conformity to popular passion, national prejudices, traditional creeds, and worldly follies. If we want to see men and women grow better, and wiser, and happier, we must show them a higher and more Divine life than our own. Our Great Master taught us this. "Ye are the salt of the earth." Ye are the light of the world." An honest man makes his neighbours honest. An abstainer from strong drink makes the nation more sober. A member of the Peace Society is a protector against war. A Christian statesman purifies political life. A Prince—like Albert the Good—makes a whole nation more noble, and free, and happy. But a mere devotee of fashionable life—a person who looks upon life as a toy, a show, a pageant, a time for self-indulgence—a person who thinks, and eats, and dresses; who buys, and sells, and votes; who lives and dies, and is buried just as the world orders him—then, I say, he does not know why he was born, and "His remembrance shall perish from the earth;" and he—having wasted his life—shall depart into a "land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." Oh! use life well. Do not waste it. Be true, be useful, be gentle, be good after the model of the ineffable goodness of the Lord Christ; and then, "Whatsoever thy heart findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."

The power to do this is not in ourselves. It was not in Moses, although it was written of him: "He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." This power to live a great spiritual, splendid life must come from the abounding

grace of Christ in the soul. Without Him we can do nothing in the stress and warfare of the life set before us. We need the wisdom of Christ. We require the patience of Christ. We must have the love of Christ. O, if he be in us—if we do know that the power of Christ is ours—if, when we are poor and weak in ourselves, we are rich and strong in Him, we shall not fail and faint in the burden and heat of the day. O Jesus, be with us! O Lord, help us! O King of Glory, leave us not in our forlornness and feebleness, but come and be our peace, and our righteousness, and our life.

O Master, at thy feet  
I bow in rapture sweet!  
Before me, as in darkening glass,  
Some glorious outlines pass  
Of love, and truth, and holiness, and  
power:  
I own them Thine, O Christ, and bless  
Thee for this hour.

Yes, let my whole life be  
One anthem unto Thee,  
And let the praise of lip and life  
Out ring all sin and strife.  
O Jesus, Master! be Thy name supreme,  
For heaven and earth the one, the grand,  
eternal theme.

Yes, give me Christ in my heart, let  
Him be enthroned there, and my life  
shall rise from the dust, and walk in fair  
beauty side by side with Him. Let  
me have His large grace within, and  
my heart shall be like a temple of  
choicest marble filled with the incense  
of heaven. Oh! give me Christ, and  
when "the fashion of this world passeth  
away," and bears with it to eternal  
darkness and doom those deluded ones  
who have trusted in it, I shall find Him,  
my Lord and my Love, "the same  
yesterday, to-day, and forever." O  
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.

I could not do without Thee,  
For years are fleeting fast,  
And soon in solemn loneliness  
The river must be passed;  
But Thou wilt never leave me,  
And though the waves roll high,  
I know Thou wilt be near me,  
And whisper, "It is I!"  
Even so, come Lord Jesus, come  
quickly." Amen.

## An Epic in a Breath.

A poor woman, supported entirely by charity for the last four years, departed this life a few hours before the present writing. She was a plain uncultured woman, of the poorer class, having had no opportunities at any period of life, and her mental endowments to begin with were of inferior order. From such a person no expression marked by either force or beauty would be expected. But though she was ignorant and unlearned, she had been with Jesus; and to some extent the history of Peter and John repeated itself in her. Having endured great bodily affliction for many years, her disease finally reached its last stage and she lay apparently at the point of death for four weeks. Every day and almost every hour was thought to be the last, but to the astonishment of all, she continued to breathe. Her sufferings were very severe, and knowing her to be ready for the great change, her friends were almost hoping for the moment of her release. Said one of them to her, "Well M—, are you ready to go?" "Ye," said she, "ready to go, but willing to wait!" Was there ever anything more beautiful? Is it possible to say as much in fewer words? Is it possible that language could be more happily chosen? The prompt word "ready," the unsought alliteration, "willing to wait," the heroic faith, the patience and meekness, all so briefly and sharply expressed, with epigrammatic point, by one wholly unconscious that she had uttered an epic in a breath, is an instance for which it would be hard to find a parallel on any page of history, poetry, philosophy, or religion. "Yes, ready to go, but willing to wait."—*Christian Index.*

No man can lift himself above the world unless he takes hold of something higher than the world; he cannot lift himself out of himself unless he grasps something higher than himself.