

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Hogg's Instructor.

THE DIARY OF A CLERGYMAN.

THE WIDOW.

APRIL 10.—Poor William Selwood departed this life seven days ago. I buried his body to-day. Query, why is it so common to prefix the adjective 'poor' to the name of a person deceased? Perhaps it was first used as the synonyme of 'dear.' But the proper meaning of the term should be retained, and the consequence would be an evident misapplication in the case of such a man as William Selwood. He died rich, yet he has left behind him an amiable widow and two sweet little daughters without a shilling in the world. He died rich, yet the expenses of his funeral were defrayed by a few friends, members of the church under my pastoral care. Would that I had been able to do so myself; but in this instance, as in many others, the hand was unable to obey the will. Does not this fact suggest that it is frequently erroneous to judge of a man's disposition by his actual conduct? I would relieve many a case of distress with which my profession makes me acquainted, but I cannot. What a pleasure it would be to have the means of proving the depth of my feeling when I enter the abodes of virtuous poverty.

But to return to William Selwood. His property, whilst he lived was not convertible into the current coin of the realm. The banks had no safe for it, nor had bankers as such, any name by which to distinguish it. It was too ethereal, too spiritual, for those who recognise no riches save those that are tangible. How the widow and children are to be provided for, I know not; that they will be cared for I am certain, and I know who will do it. The deceased Christian left them to the providence of Him who feeds the fowls of the air. They are the wards of God. Happy widow and orphans, fear not! Bread shall be given you: your water shall be sure.

May 12.—In early life I fell into the common error of students, imagining that night was the best time for study. Experience has taught me that this is a mistake. I always study best in the morning, reserving the afternoon for pastoral visits, and the evening for public engagements. In consequence of the following letter, however, I departed from my usual method to-day:—

Bristol, May 11, 18—

Rev. Sir.—We have heard that William Selwood, at one time a clerk in our counting-house, is connected with your congregation. Should this be so, we shall feel obliged if you will favor us with his address at your earliest convenience, as certain circumstances, long covered with mystery, have recently come to light, respecting which we feel it a matter of justice that we should have an immediate interview with him; and that you may the more readily comply with our request, we may intimate that the result of the interview will doubtless gratify him and yourself, as well as Rev. sir, your obedient servants,

P. PRIOR, STEPHORNE & RUDGE.

The perusal of this mysterious letter excited in my mind a good deal of surprise. I had known Selwood only as an excellent gardener, although frequently the superiority of his language over that generally used by men in his class of life, had suggested the thought that he had known better days. Still I had never put any questions to him about his early life, as I do not approve of anything approaching to prying curiosity. The time had now come, however, when it became necessary to ascertain some facts from the widow, to cast light, if possible, upon the meaning of this letter. Taking it with me, I went to the cottage in which the widow and her children lived.

The morning was exceedingly beautiful. Rain had fallen during the night, and now the sun was pouring his warm rays upon corn-field and meadow, upon flower and fruit tree. It was nature's joyous youth time, its period of love and song. The lambs were gambolling on the sward, the butterfly and bee were fluttering and humming from flower to flower; and the birds were darting from branch to branch among the trees, or circling in playful eddies in the air; whilst the ambitious lark, ascending its buoyant element, was trilling its exquisite notes at the very gates of heaven. Bountiful Creator, how admirably hast thou adapted the varied sources of enjoyment to the capacities of thy creatures. Alas, that man who boasts himself the wisest being in the world, should not only fail to appreciate the happiness adapted to his nature, but also that he should exhibit habitually the perverse ingenuity of adulterating it! Well, despair not; it took six long days to bring a splendid work out of the chaos; and humanity, though it seems to rise but slowly out of moral disorder, shall yet shine for the most glorious thing in the universe.

'Good morning, Mrs Selwood,' said I, on entering.

'My dear pastor! This is an unexpected pleasure, so early in the day.'

'Why, I replied, the morning is so inviting, that I find it quite exhilarating to cross the fields, and listen to the concert of birds.'

'Come here Jane, Mary,' addressing the children. Presently I had one on each knee; whilst, looking at the window I observed a couple of flower pots, as clean as water could wash them, containing two exquisite geraniums in full bloom. The garden plot attached to the cottage was also as neat as Mrs Sel-

wood's hands could make it. Not a single weed was to be seen. Speaking officially, I had found a suitable text, and I resolved to preach upon it. 'I must compliment you, Mrs Selwood,' said I, 'upon your taste in flowers.'

'Indeed I do not deserve the compliment, sir,' she replied with a sigh; 'for though I love them, I knew nothing of their nature and habits until my dear William taught me.'

'And I daresay he found a willing pupil,' I replied.

'He at least deserved to find one,' said she, 'for a kinder husband, as you well know, few women ever have.'

'I have often thought of asking your late husband where he learned the art in which he so greatly excelled, but it so happened that I never did so.'

After a long pause, during which she was evidently embarrassed, which I occupied in playing with little Mary's ringlets, she said, 'Jane, Mary, my dears, will you run out a little and play on the grass. I shall call you presently.' The children instantly obeyed.

And now, sir, she began, 'you have given me an opportunity of attending to one of the dying requests of my dear William. He charged me to make you acquainted with his history, when I could do so without claiming too much of your valuable time. My husband was not brought up for a gardener, but in his youth he was fond of botany, and after business hours he used to spend his summer evenings in the grounds of a gentleman living in the neighborhood of his native place; and from a pious old Scotch gardener there, he acquired his knowledge both of flowers and religion. Little did he know at the time that his knowledge would be of such service to him in after life.' She paused.

'Proceed, I pray you,' I said; 'you cannot hesitate to place confidence in me.'

'No, my pastor, I do not; but the past seems like a troubled dream; and the sorrow of which I was the—hope innocent—occasion to him who is gone, fills me with sadness. William was for some time book-keeper to a mercantile house in the west of England. My parents lived in the same town. There was in the office with William, a young man, named Alfred Strathorne, who sought my hand. His position in life was superior to mine, and his prospects in the world were flattering. But I discouraged his approaches, because I did not esteem him, and because I had too much reason to believe that he trifled with his best interest. My father was dead, and the grateful duty devolved upon my sister and myself to support our beloved mother. This we did by diligence at the needle. My suitor persisted in his addresses. I sought the advice of my judicious mother. Her advice was short and full of meaning. 'My dear Jane,' said she, 'never place your happiness in the keeping of a man who refuses to seek his happiness in the fear of God.' I resolved, strengthened thus, courteously but firmly to prohibit Strathorne's visits. I did so, and succeeded. Very shortly afterwards my late husband was introduced to me. It is enough to say, that mutual esteem and attachment sprung up between us. William was greatly valued by his employers for his ability and integrity. We looked forward to an honorable union, to days of peace and usefulness, and we were both thankful for the prospect of being able to add to the comforts of my mother in her declining days. In due time we were married, the senior partner in the firm kindly giving me away. About six weeks after our marriage, William came home much latter than usual, appeared greatly dejected. I enquired the reason, and was beyond measure distressed by seeing that he evaded the question. Still I did all in my power to soothe him; and on our retiring to seek rest, he told me that the time had evidently come to try our principles, and to put our religious profession to the test. 'Six months ago,' he said, 'my employers made me cashier. Three days ago, a serious deficit, amounting to nearly two hundred pounds, was discovered in the accounts. How it has happened I cannot tell, but the fact is too obvious, and there is a chain of evidence which I can neither break or withstand. All I know is, that on my return to the office after our marriage, I found a slip of paper on my desk, on which the simple but fearful word *Revenge!* was written in large letters. I thought nothing of it at the time, but threw it in the fire. Forbid that I should judge any one, but since the discovery of the loss, Alfred Strathorne has been the most active in trying to find the guilty party, and he is frequently closeted with the firm, who are increasingly suspicious in their looks when they pass me. How the matter will end I know not; but I leave myself in the hands of Him to whom all things are known.' Ten days after this painful conversation, my husband was discharged from his employment with the intimation that, in consequence of his previous good conduct, and on account of his young wife, they should not prosecute, which, they said, would certainly end in transportation for life; but said, if they heard of any application on his part to any other house for employment, they should instantly reveal his character as an accomplished hypocrite. William intimated that he would rather they would prosecute, as the process of investigation might dispel the mystery. 'No,' they replied, 'you shall not have the benefit of legal trickery. The case is plain enough: begone!' At this very time my mother died, and her last words to my heart broken husband were, 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' We left the town and came to this part of the country. After much privation, William obtained employment as a gardener. More than

ten years have elapsed since then, and you know the rest.'

The tears which had been gradually stealing down the widow's cheeks now burst out, and kindly relieved her. Beautiful tears! ye are at once signs of sorrow and ministers of joy.

After a time I said, 'Dear Mrs Selwood, I need not say how deeply I am moved by your narrative; but supposing an opportunity were afforded to clear up this old mystery even yet would you embrace it?'

'Such an opportunity is almost impossible, and besides, it is too late. I am sure that my husband was guiltless; and now he is beyond the reach of trouble.'

'Yes; but his memory?'

'Ah, true,' she exclaimed; 'for the sake of his memory I would gladly undertake any toil.'

'Well, remember your mother's prophecy on her death bed. Will you go with me to Bristol?'

The widow started. 'Did I, said she, 'mention Bristol?'

'You did not; but this letter will explain why I mentioned it, and also why I am here this morning.'

Mrs Selwood, though of a delicate constitution and gentle habits, possessed a well balanced mind, purified by adversity and strengthened by faith. Consequently after the first surprise of the letter, she said firmly, 'My esteemed pastor, I thank you I will go with you to Bristol, or any where else your judgment may dictate, but—' and colored deeply.

'But what?'

'The—the—expense, sir. Oh, I cannot think of it! One of the deepest sorrows of my dear husband arose from his inability to add to your—'

'That will do. Not a word more. We shall start to-morrow, health and life permitting.'

May 15.—Mrs Selwood and her lovely children are in their cottage, and I am once more in my little study. Bristol is a large and prosperous city, and the house of Prior, Stephorne & Rudge, seems to be none of the least of its many large, mercantile establishments. I shall not fill my diary with what I saw and heard, notwithstanding the contrast presented to the quiet routine of my rural pastorate. Suffice it to record that the widow and her interesting children were most kindly received by the head of the respectable firm—a grey-headed, intelligent, apparently really good man. He addressed Mrs Selwood as follows:—

'I am authorised by my partners—a duty the discharge of which, gives me pleasure mingled with regret—to say that the person who attempted to ruin your late husband's character, and apparently succeeded, is a convicted felon in one of our penal colonies. He has confessed the series of Satanic plans by which he robbed us for the express purpose of ruining Selwood. I am not accustomed to long speeches. I shall, therefore, only add that I have advertised over the kingdom for William Selwood, at the same time published his innocence to the world. I despair of ever hearing of him; but the other day one of our travellers hinted that this reverend gentleman knew something of him. I have found his widow and his children. His salary was £150 a year when he was unrighteously discharged. It is ten years since. The amount which he would have received from us during that period, at this rate, would have been £1500. That sum is yours. We have purchased an annuity with it for your benefit, and I desire that your children may be educated at our expense.'

From the London People's Journal.

CRIME.

ITS CAUSES AND ITS CURE.

The existence of crime in all classes of society, and more especially among those which are poor and uneducated, necessitates a system of punishment, which all grades of society are equally bound to observe in its strictest integrity. Crime abounds. It pervades society, and is prevalent among the young and old, the rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant; and the more ignorance, the more crime.

The criminal returns for England and Wales show, that in 1848, 30,549 persons were committed for trial; and that 22,890 of these were found guilty and sentenced—60 to death, 67 to transportation for life, upwards of 3000 to transportation for different periods, and the remainder to imprisonment, fines, &c. These returns exhibit a large amount of crime, in England and Ireland. A closer approximation, however, to its real extent would be obtained, if all the cases charged and tried before the magistrates were included. In that case the annual aggregate for the United Kingdom would exceed 200,000.

Assuming this estimate to be correct—and there is no reason to doubt it—we may well be astonished at the concern the virtuous and unconvicted classes exhibit for the proper administration of the laws. This dark, deep, and wide-spread sea of crime is fed from innumerable sources, and its tributaries arise from all classes of society. In England and Wales the committals have very considerably increased; and from the tables consulted, it appears that in thirty-five years—1805 to 1840 they have more than tripled—a large and alarming increase; more than commensurate with the increase of the population.

And yet during all this period, the efforts of the humane have been increasing; schools have been multiplied throughout the land; consecrated buildings for the destruction of

sin and Satan are as numerous as bakers' shops; crime doctors without number are employed, and many of them richly endowed, to apply their several nostrums; and yet, crime is not diminishing, but rather increasing—swelling around us. [Very] serious and suggestive, then, is the inquiry—How comes this?

Crime has a deeper root than we are willing to admit. It lies deep in the human constitution. All men have natural tendencies to crime, as well as to love, or veneration or virtue. When these tendencies, either from endowment or education, or both combined, are unduly strong, and no influence of sufficient power exists to control or counteract them, crime is the necessary, unavoidable result. Popular opinion and prevailing superstitions—which are never so false as not to contain some vein of truth—recognise, in part at least, the principle laid down; but coupled with such absurdities as render it no avail to the removal of crime. When crime is committed under no strong external temptation, it is at once attributed to some controlling power within, leading to sin. And, as the effect must be traced to some personal cause, that controlling power the people at once designate: the devil is its name. I could not get over it: the devil tempted me; the devil overcame me, and drove me to it, we frequently hear the untempted transgressor say, in palliation of his offence, admitting the existence of an inward influence, which, through ignorance of his own nature, he ascribes to the fancied author of all ill.

Crime, then, has its roots deep in the constitution of man. It springs either from a naturally ill-balanced constitution, in which the animal is predominant and not counteracted by strong moral training; or, as is more frequently the case, from a constitution in which circumstances favor the development of the lower powers, and afford no suitable provision for the higher. In either case the result is the same; we fall before temptation and crime is almost unavoidable.

This view of the case clears it of many of its presumed difficulties, and accounts for many otherwise inexplicable facts. It is not with criminals themselves that we must attempt to cure crime, but it is with the young, the yet untempted, we must deal: it is easier and cheaper; (no small consideration,) to teach the young than to punish the adult, and the expense of one conviction would suffice to educate a hundred innocent children.

And for the cause of crime; it appears that age, sex, climate, and even seasons, exercise no small influence upon crime; but the principal active causes of demoralization may be comprised in three words—Intemperance, Poverty and Irreligion; and till we can remove or greatly modify, the influence of these evils, little hope of amelioration can exist.

But who are we to blame for all this crime? Shall the criminal alone be answerable for his misdeeds? Is the poor man alone to be blamed if he fall before temptation—or is the wretched needwoman, (of whose class there are calculated to be 28,000 in London) alone to be held responsible for her impurity? We do not desire to excuse or palliate; but, while infamy and punishment are hurled at the head of the offender, we should not forget that to society, which permits, perpetuates, nay, sometimes creates crime, part of the blame to be laid: and as surely as we remain a people unmoved by the calls of humanity, so surely shall we pay the penalty in conscience and in purse.

Should we, then, let the individual criminal escape? Certainly not. It would be an additional wrong to the individual. Society, if it would perform its duty, must look to him. It must place him in new circumstances, in which his hitherto dormant or inactive moral powers shall be cherished, and his animal and criminal curbed; until by degrees, the moral and spiritual faculties gain ascendancy over the lower passions and appetites. If our system of punishment have not this aim and effect, it is not what the criminal needs. Confinement or torture, as a punishment, may prevent, for the time, the commission of crime; but though the criminal's propensities are restrained from doing actual injury, they are, probably, only gathering strength, as the pent-up waters, to dash forth with greater impetuosity than ever when freedom is regained. Hence, how seldom do you find a really reformed criminal—reformed by prison discipline! Possibly, fear may restrain, for a time, but generally it has little influence. Each fresh offence is more enormous than the previous one; and so will it be to the end of the chapter—till punishment effects its proper purpose,—till the prison becomes a moral training school, a hospital for the treatment of moral invalids, diseased and disordered souls, restoring them to health and soundness.

If crime is to be cured, we must not deal with the confirmed criminal—though he should by no means be neglected—but our operations must be mainly directed to the rising generation. The causes, we have seen, are primary and secondary: these causes we must remove—the first, by giving to the newborn a well balanced constitution; the last by removing the means of temptation.

But the proposition of a well balanced constitution may seem Utopian: it is not so. It has been proved, over and over again, that we can improve the breed of the lower animals by proper attention to the various circumstances which tend to raise them in the scale of beauty and usefulness;—and it is a physiological fact, equally incontrovertible, that, by proper training of the parents of a nation, the youth will certainly share in a great degree, in the rise and progress of morality and good