

The Religious Intelligencer.

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That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ—PETER.

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Religious Selections.

The Ostrich Feather.

CAN A MAID FORGET HER ORNAMENTS?

Soon after my settlement at—there was a renewed interest in regard to religion, which made our meetings thronged and very solemn. The evening service, or lecture, was especially crowded. Among the audience I noticed a young lady, whose dress and air were distinguishable, and gave her prominence or conspicuity—especially as, for the most part, the people were quite plain in their appearance. This was many years ago; but now, if we were to enter the same congregation, he might think himself among a fashionable audience in the neighborhood of the Fifth Avenue.

What particularly took my attention in the costume of this young woman was a splendid ostrich feather, which fell gracefully over her bonnet—the only such ornament in the whole congregation. Of course, it was a very conspicuous adornment; and more than one turned the eye in the direction of that plume as it moved up the aisle, or marked, by its snowy whiteness, the place where its owner had seated herself. One could hardly help looking towards it. As I entered the place of worship, it was the first thing that caught my eye; and if I had commenced the service, ere it appeared, the very moment it went dancing along the aisle, "there," said I to myself, "is that ostrich feather again."

She, over whose head it so gracefully curled and trembled, was the daughter of one of the plainest dressed women in the congregation. Her mother adhered to the Quaker costume, having belonged to that sect: but in process of time had changed her religion, without changing her dress. The contrast, therefore, between the mother and daughter was very striking. The latter was indolgent with whatever style of dress she chose to adopt. Generally, it was not extravagant; and the plume, so conspicuous here, would not have been particularly noticed in a large and more fashionable place.

Whether any good people were disturbed by it, or any of the plainer sort were envious of its wearer, I know not. I heard no remarks concerning it. It seemed to be taken for granted that if Miss—chose to move about with a feather from an ostrich waving over her head, it was nobody's business but her own. It was in this light that she herself regarded the matter; and I could not perceive that she exhibited any more vanity in the wear of it, than others did in their bows of ribbon, their ear-rings and their artificial garlands. And so the ostrich feather continued to be worn, and I began to be so accustomed to it that I hardly cared whether it was on or off.

The first thought might be that the young woman was vain; that she wished to attract attention; to make herself "the observed of all observers;" but I was well convinced this was not the case. She was not one of the frivolous kind, whose mind is absorbed in the changing fashions, and who would feel disgraced almost to be one day behind the latest of the ton. There was too much good sense imprinted on her face to allow of such a thought. Her mind had evidently a higher range. It had been disciplined by a substantial education, and her thoughts at this very time were tinged with solemnity and turning with unwonted interest in the direction of salvation. I kept my eye on the feather, or rather on the countenance which it shaded, and thought I discovered signs of interest in my message. At any rate, it was always before me in a state of fixed and solemn attention.

The work of grace among us gradually deepened and extended; and some young ladies—the flower of my flock—came to ask spiritual counsel, and at length openly espoused the cause of Christ. I expected to see the ostrich feather come also; but as yet it continued to wave in the distance. The work still went on. More and more the solemnity gathered over the people, and hard faces began to relax into something like sensible emotion. One evening I missed the ostrich feather. Its absence was unusual. Can she be sick, or out of town? I pondered on the matter. At length, in a distant part of the house, I discovered the bonnet, but without the feather. Something had happened to it. Some hand had removed it. Was it her own? And wherefore had she done it? My thoughts were working upon the matter. I really missed the plume. It seemed as if something was wanting in the audience to complete the tout ensemble. But, as occasionally my eye would turn in that direction, I fancied I discovered the reason of the disappearance of the feather in the very earnest and intense look of the wearer, as if she were in pursuit of that better ornament, "the pearl of great price." There was in her expression something that reminded me of Mary weeping at Jesus' feet and opening the alabaster box to anoint his head. Moore's lines naturally come to one's mind.

"When bringing every balmy sweet
Her day of luxury stored,
She o'er her Saviour's hallowed feet
The precious ointment poured.

"And wiped them with that golden hair,
Where once the diamond shone;
But now those gems of grief are there
Which shine for God alone."

Nor was I mistaken. I never saw the ostrich

feather after that date. But something more beautiful I saw—"the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

In my interviews with this interesting young woman, which were frequent, I never alluded to the white plume, and she herself never did, nor could I tell why it disappeared, nor what motives induced her to lay it aside. I had my suspicions, however, that it was a voluntary sacrifice—if so small a thing were worthy of being so called; that, feeling the contrast between her emotions within and her appearance without, she plucked the sign of vanity from her head, and said: "Let the inner and the outer be more in correspondence." Her conversion was clear and decided. With less apparent emotion than some, there was more of fixedness of purpose. She stood among the first in every good word and work, strengthened the hands and encouraged the heart of her minister, and at length became a minister's wife and wrought with him in his work, making his home happy and his ministry efficient.

"Read your hearts and not your garments," is the command of one of the prophets, or of the Lord rather, by his prophet. Hence, it has seemed to me superfluous to preach against extravagance in dress whilst the heart of Vanity is unaffected by the higher considerations of religion. Besides, what but a nice and discriminating view of external proprieties, such as is gained under a sense of religious obligation, can regulate this matter?

It is not very uncommon, we know, to hear some good people find fault with the style of dress adopted by their more affluent fellow-professors. I have no doubt this is done, at times, from a sincere regard to the promotion of a consistent piety. Again, I have feared that so good a motive might not prompt the criticism. I have seen cases where the censorious individual has after coming himself to the possession of ample means, gone into a system of external display, greater even than that which he had condemned. How little we know our own hearts the following story will go to prove.

THE SUPERVISORY DEACON.

In a certain town in New Jersey—not a hundred miles from the metropolis of fashion—there lived a very worthy and pious man, and a deacon of the church. He took a general supervision of the morals and manners of the congregation, and was ready to check and reprove anything which seemed to him inconsistent with true piety. It so happened that under the ordinary course of worldly prosperity the members, and especially the younger ones, began to indulge somewhat more than usual in a taste for dress. Intercourse with the city had wrought a considerable change in the style of things among most of them. But the good man alluded to kept his ground. Not only so, his spirit was chafed and pained at the incoming extravagance. It troubled him on the Sabbath. He actually could not worship without distraction, nor hear the sermon without thinking of what Christians were coming to him in this day of worldliness and degeneracy. It came at last to be such a burden that he felt it to be his duty to wait on his minister and request him to reprove the people from the pulpit.

The pastor was a man of good judgment and sound piety, and with a little touch of the humor in him. He welcomed the deacon, as usual, very cordially, and inquired what good word of encouragement he had to offer to his minister?

The deacon shook his head, and drew a deep sigh.

"What can be the matter? Has anything adverse happened?"

"Then did the good man open his message and deliver his burden, saying that extravagance in dress had risen to that pitch he could stand it no longer, and he feared that the good cause would die out under it. He came to see what could be done to check it, and whether it would not be expedient for the minister to preach and administer the necessary reproof. Pride, he said, would be their ruin, unless something was speedily done."

The minister, not being aware that any such reproofs were needed, was rather surprised at the request. In fact, he had been pained to observe that the taste of the people was improving and that the congregation was putting on a more attractive aspect. He could not sympathize at all with the deacon, nor did he believe in present necessity for public censure.

"In what respects," he inquired, "are the people at fault? Wherein does their extravagance in dress appear?"

"Oh! in everything. City fashions are coming to prevail in every kind of garment that is worn. The young men, especially, are becoming proud and dainty in their apparel."

"Well, what is to be done?" inquired the minister. "If I preach on extravagance in general, it will have no effect. I must state in what particulars this evil prevails. To do this, I must necessarily show what kind of costume, in texture, shape and fashion, should be worn by the young men of the congregation. I must, either from yourself or from some other, obtain the requisite pattern of christian sobriety in this matter. Come, now, let me take your views." So, taking pen in hand, he proposed to put down first the objectionable features of dress, and next in what way they should be altered to meet the deacon's views of christian consistency.

It was an unexpected course, and the fault-finder at first objected. But the minister insisted. "And now," said he, "I will put down each item which has been a matter of grievance."

"Well," said the deacon, "there is the hat. It used to have a respectable brim and a crown not too lofty, whereas now, it rises like a haystack and has almost no brim."

The minister, with a smile in the corner of his mouth, had been sketching the rude shape of a man on his paper, and topping it off with a hat of respectable brim and height. "What next?" said he.

"Then there is the coat. How absurd and ridiculous it is! It used to have a broad skirt and long waist, whereas now, since city fashions have come, it has a swallow tail, and the buttons are half way up the back. What an ungainly look it has!"

The short-waisted, swallow-tailed coats was duly chronicled, and its opposite, that which the deacon would recommend, put upon the pen-and-ink sketch before him. Some other things were suggested, and the figure was complete. The minister hands it over to the deacon, and asks if all is right? The latter saw, at a glance, that the figure resembled himself, thought somewhat in caricature. "Did you mean this for me?" he inquired, his face somewhat flushed.

"I did. You have described your own dress, and I have put it on you. You are after all, I am afraid, the proudest person in the parish. You wish every man to conform to your style of dress. In one word, you wish to set the fashions for the whole congregation. If I preach on the subject of pride and vanity next Sunday, you must not be surprised if you are hit as hard a blow as any of my hearers. But, my good friend, let us look into our own hearts, and see if there isn't something bigger than a mote there. And let us all 'read our hearts and not our garments,' for man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart."

It is needless to say that the deacon never came to his minister with any similar complaint; but that, profiting by the advice, he schooled his spirit into a more humble and charitable frame. —[New York Observer.

First Truth, then Earnestness.

At the recent meeting of the Church Missionary Society in London, Dr. Waldegrave, (Bishop of Carlisle,) moved a resolution. The following extract from his speech deserves extensive circulation:—

"The Bishop of Carlisle rose and said—My Christian Friends, there is a watchword that I should like to hold up to your consideration. It is the watchword of earnestness. We are continually told that it matters not what a man believes, or what a man teaches, so long as he is in earnest. My brethren, Saul of Tarsus was an earnest man when he persecuted our Lord Jesus Christ. But was Saul of Tarsus right? No; on the contrary, he himself afterwards looks back upon that day, and says, 'I was a blasphemer; I was a persecutor; I was injurious.' He holds himself up as one of the most remarkable instances of sovereign grace. He tells us that he was only saved, because he did it ignorantly and through unbelief. Earnestness, then, is not sufficient alone; for though an angel from heaven were to preach to you any other Gospel than that he receives, let him be accused. What, then, is the watchword of the Christian? Truth; the truth as it is in Jesus. The truth, not as a treasure which is buried, and for which we know not where to seek, but the truth which is brought forth by the Lord himself, and placed in our hands as a sacred deposit to be defended even to the death. And why is this to be our watchword? Because the work which is to be done is not of man; it is of God. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.' The devil knows that the Spirit is a great worker among men. The devil knows that the Spirit attaches itself, if I may so speak, to truth; and therefore it is that, at first, by traditionalism, then by easy mutation to rationalism he endeavors to undermine and sap the earth. My friends, let me address myself for a few moments to the subject of truth. We are reminded of it by the concluding words of the resolution. We are told that England is summoned to the forefront of the struggle for the maintenance and the universal diffusion of the truth as it is in Jesus. Now, my rev. brethren, remember that you and I stand, as it were, at the centre and focus of light—that you and I stand on the hill of the Lord, of which it has been said, 'I will make my hill and the place round about my pillars a blessing.' If, then, the light upon that hill is dim—if, then, the blessing is small, how can we expect that that light or that blessing will extend throughout the earth? I do most earnestly desire to impress upon your minds the remembrance of your duty to maintain the truth as it is in Jesus, and especially to maintain the truth as it is in Jesus in that which is called the parson's throne—the pulpit. In the first place, we are to maintain the simple truth. It is a most important matter that we should deliver our message, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. We must not handle the Word of God falsely—we must not dress it up so as to make it a pleasant and marketable article, but by manifestations of the truth commend ourselves to

every man's conscience in the sight of God. When that remarkable man, William Howells, broke forth in a sentence like this:—'I was not present when God said, "Let there be light: and there was light;" I was not present when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; but I was present when a nobler work sprang into existence—when God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, commanded it to shine into my heart, and to give me the light of the knowledge of the glory of his Gospel.' Say not, that if you try to bring out the simple truth, your preaching will be jejune. It will be jejune if you do not bring out the whole truth, and the full truth. Let me impress upon you that it must be God's Word—not His Word modified, not His Word compromised, not His Word shorn,—so shall My Word,—not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper the thing wherewith I sent it.' If we could but act according to the pattern of the poor country clergyman of whom I once heard. He was a poor scholar, but a true Christian. He had great confidence in God's Word. He prepared his message with care; then he took his manuscript, and spread it before the Lord, and said, 'Here, Lord, is the best that I can do of myself. It is for Thee to bless it.' Try that, and be assured that God will bless it. Depend only upon God's Word. I was talking, the other day, to a clergyman who had tried to act upon this plan, and he said to me, 'God has given me such a blessing. It is, that I have nothing to do but to attend to the spiritual wants of my people, and those whom He has brought to Himself by the ministration of His Word; and they are so full of love that they will allow me to do nothing secular: they require me to attend solely to the spiritual wants of the parish, and I assure you that it has been cared for in a way that it never had been before.' Now do, my beloved brethren, try to ask God to give us all grace to take the truth for our watchword, the simple truth, the full truth, the fresh truth and the trusted truth. Then there will be a blessing, not only in our own neighbourhood, but in the uttermost parts of the earth. Then we shall have the men we want, the money we want; all those things will follow if we do but trust the Lord, and keep His Word."

Last Days of Dr. Payson.

It is said that Dr. Payson's preaching was more tender in the latter years of his life. His soul evidently became more subdued, under the constant chafing of sickness, his sympathies for the infirmities of human nature livelier, as he mingled more freely with men, and his religious experience was more and more mellowed by an increasingly luminous joy. Although he continued with unabated fidelity to warn sinners of the wrath to come, yet he did it with stronger marks of compassionate yearning, weeping and pleading as if he would pour out his very being for them. Paralyzed and wasted with disease, his spiritual face beaming with benignity, he would stand or sit, so long as he could be carried to the meeting-house, and entreat the rebellious to be reconciled to God. His prayers, always powerful and comprehensive, would reach, on these occasions, a pitch of sublime and pathetic utterance that would awe and melt even the most obdurate hearts. His sanctified soul, rising higher and higher in its devout raptures, in its intensely earnest supplications, would seem to lift up the whole congregation as by an irresistible spell, until they felt themselves suffused with the "light of the excellent glory," and standing face to face with Jehovah. Another fact of his later life is that his sermons were more frequently extemporaneous. This was due partly to increasing bodily weakness, and partly to the conviction in his own mind that these efforts were most signally blessed. His brilliant conceptions under a glowing inspiration, aided by an earnest though not violent action, and a voice of rare compass, depth and sweetness, would so far rivet the attention of his hearers as to form the themes of their conversation for weeks afterwards. To have written more for the pulpit would have shorn him of much of his power. While we might have had more of the written, we would have had less of the living man. Sometimes he went to his week-evening lectures not knowing what he would preach, more from necessity than choice. Upon one dark, drizzly evening, the worshippers had picked their way to the vestry with lanterns. The hint was enough. His text was: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." The discourse is said to have been among the most successful of his life. It is surprising that he should have regretted that he could not write more fully and constantly and that he should have at all consented to read except on special occasions. But to this habit of reading we are indebted for most which remains of his thoughts. He wrote only to preach, and if he had not felt the obligation to write for immediate usefulness, he probably would have written much less than he did. Thanks to his devotion to the pen for some of the finest specimens of sacred eloquence on record! Would that the nimble-fingered stenographer had then lived to catch and chain to paper those inimitable passages of beauty and wisdom, which dropped on all occasions from his "golden mouth." Still they are not lost, but reproducing themselves indefinitely as so many precious seed-truths which can not die. Spoken words perish no more

than written. One generation, as one man, transmits its great unwritten constitution to another.

In no sphere did the heavenly spirit of this saintly man shine with greater clearness and a sweeter charm than in his own home. "Oh! he was so gentle and so pleasant all the time," said a sister, to me, who was a domestic in his family. A great preacher, popular, almost adored by his congregation and his denomination, traduced by his enemies, nervous always, sick half the time, but a gentleman in that privacy where too many great men deem themselves at liberty to act the tyrant and the brute! His house was consecrated by prayer, and remained a Bethel until his household left it. Thence he was wont, with his little family group, to make daily excursions at the silent hours of twilight to the sweet fields of Eden, whence they would return refreshed and enchanted with its beautiful delights. Alas! it is hard to foretell what houses will come to, any more than men. That same dwelling, the scene of so many spiritual struggles and victories, in every room of which one would think the breath of prayer yet lingered—where the death of this heroic and seraphic man took place in many respects one of the grandest displays of the divinity of Christianity which ever occurred has become—shall I say it?—a German tavern, from which is retailed, there is reason to think, something stronger than cold water, and that, too, in Portland, the chief city of the State which boasts a prohibitory liquor law. Property rapidly changes owners in a growing city.

Nearly thirty-four years ago Dr. Payson ascended. Wondering groups paused and gazed, as if to see the conquering spirit in its upward flight. A few only of those who were blessed with his ministry are left. Their hearts warm and their countenances brighten at the mention of his name. His dust rests in the old Portland cemetery in the eastern section of the city. A decent, plain monument of white marble marks the spot. The epitaph is simply: "Edward Payson, D.D., born at Rindge, N.H., July 25th, 1783. Was ordained pastor of the Second Congregational Church in Portland, Me., Dec. 16th, 1807. Died Oct. 22d, 1837. His record is on high." Yes, I have thought as I have stood and looked upon this unostentatious inscription, his record is in this city—in this broad and extensive country—in every land where Christ is loved.

Little Sins.

Let us be on our guard against little sins; against what men call little sins, for there is nothing really little in the way of sin. Watch against anything that wounds the conscience, however slightly. Conscience is a sacred thing. Guard well your spiritual life. Watch against the little sin that insensibly may wound, and thus in the end destroy. You can easily kill a man by stabbing him with one blow to the heart. But may you not easily kill a man also by opening a little vein in his wrist? The blood may only flow drop by drop, but if you don't stop that wound you will bleed to death, and just as surely as if one plunged a dagger into your heart and sent you into eternity in a moment. Beware, then, of the little things that keep the wounds of the soul open; guard against little sins, which, if not guarded against, will surely destroy the soul as one great sin.

John Newton says, Satan seldom comes to Christians with great temptations, or with temptations to commit a great sin. You bring a green log and a candle together, and they are very safe neighbors. But bring a few shavings and set them a-light, and then bring a few small sticks, and let them take fire, and the log be in the midst of them, and you will soon get rid of your log. And so it is with little sins. You will be startled with the idea of committing a great sin, and so the devil brings a little temptation and leaves you to indulge yourself. "There is no great harm in this," "no great peril in that," and so by these little chips we are first easily lighted up, and at last the great green log is burned. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. —[Newman Hall.

Ministers Consulting people in Ministerial Duties.

"While I had occasion to speak and hear of some ministers, their being swayed much by the advice of good people in dark steps of their ministerial work, I was satisfied in the evident clearness of the following rules:—

"1. That it is very dangerous to lay too much stress upon the advice and apprehensions of the best of people, as to what may be sin or duty in matters that belong not to his station; for the promise of the Spirit's teaching belongs not to them as to what may be the duty of the minister's station. Therefore,

"2. It is safer to desire the help of their prayers, that God may, according to his promise, clear us, or discover to us what is duty, than to learn them to step out of their stations, and advise in things that belong not to them.

"Observe, ministers, for most part, are more shaken about the truths of religion and the foundations than about their own state; people, more about their state than the truths of religion. Ministers are helped to clear people as to what they are straitened about; and people are, or may be, helpful to ministers in what they are in

the dark about. Thus they mutually excel, and are excellent, to humble both, and keep both in their stations." —[Rev. Thomas Halyburton.

The Word of God.

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth." How gently in night's silent hours, The dew distils upon the flowers; How softly on the grass new mown. The crystal drops of rain are strown. But gentler, softer, falls Thy Word, On Childhood's tender heart, O Lord: Making the germs of grace appear Like snowdrops, in the opening year. Its light reveal'd to infant eyes, Is darkness to the worldly wise, We know, we feel the Bible true, For it has made our hearts anew. —[Rev. Hugh Stowell.

Transforming Power of Vice.

You have heard the story of the Italian artist who, meeting with a child of exquisite beauty, wished to preserve his features, for fear he should never see such loveliness again. So he painted the charming face upon canvas, and hung it upon the walls of his studio. In his most sombre hours that sweet gentle countenance was like an angel of light to him. Its presence filled his soul with the purest aspirations. "If ever I find," said he, "a perfect contrast to this beautiful face, I will paint that also, and hang them side by side—an ideal of heaven and hell." Years passed. At length, in a distant land, he saw in a prison the most hideous creature he ever gazed upon—a fierce haggard fiend with glaring eyes, and cheeks deeply furrowed with lust and crime. The artist remembered his vow, and immediately painted the picture of this loathsome form to hang beside the portrait of the lovely boy. The contrast was perfect. His dream was realized. The two poles of the moral were before him. What was the surprise of this artist, on inquiry into the history of this horrid wretch, to find that he was once that lovely little boy! Both of these pictures, the angel and the demon of the same soul, now hung side by side in a Tuscan Gallery. Kind reader, you need not travel to a foreign gallery to see the transforming power of vice upon the body. The brazen-faced, wanton-looking wretch of womanhood was once a sweet, modest little girl, that blushed at the slightest indelicate allusion. That obese, bloated brandy-burnt visage was once a joyous-hearted boy. What strange alchemy has wrought this bestial transformation? They have been in the hard battles of the appetite, and carry scars of many campaigns. In the basement cells of inebriety and saloons of licentiousness, many youthful forms are sitting for their portraits. The demon spirit of lust and intemperance is gradually moulding them into fiends. You may, young reader, steal secretly into these halls of inebriety and harlotry. Your parents and friends may little suspect your wayward proclivities. But be asured your sin will find you out. Vice cannot remain concealed. The soul has no place to hide it. Soon the foul flame, through some rent or fissure of the body, will find expression. The inmost love, desires, affinities of the soul, will mould the plastic boy into a corresponding likeness. The body is a flesh-and-blood statue of the spirit, and the countenance the play ground of thought and feeling. An old poet has said:

"For of the soul the body form doth take;
For soul is form, and doth the body make."

Motives to Holiness.

A man who has been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God should be pure. He who is on his life should be holy. He who is attended by celestial beings, and who is soon-to-be known not how soon—to be translated to heaven should be holy. Are angels my attendants? Then I should walk worthy of their companionship. Am I soon to go and dwell with angels? Then I should be pure. Are these feet soon to tread the court of heaven? Is this tongue soon to unite with heavenly beings in praising God? Are these eyes of mine soon to look on the throne of eternal glory, and on the ascended Redeemer? Then these feet and eyes and lips should be pure and holy; and I should be dead to the world and live for heaven. —[Albert Barnes.

Summerfield.

I HEARD Summerfield make one of the first addresses, if not the first he ever made in this country. He represented the Bible as the vine of Joseph, which ran over the wall; and so traced the vine running over sectarian, tribe, and national walls—over mountains, rivers, lakes, and oceans—over all the barriers which separate men and nations from one another, till it bore fruit on all sides of all walls, for the healing of the nations. Nearly forty years have since passed away, and the figure of Summerfield is yet before me in the beauty of meekness, and with the simplicity of eloquence, tracing the vine of Joseph as it spread over the walls. I even now see his long white-finger making its undulating line. —[Morgan.