

THE EARTHLY PEWS AND THE HEAVENLY MANSIONS.*

James ii, 1-4.

On a pleasant Sabbath evening I fell into a quiet reverie, and this was the burden of it:

I saw a beautiful building which had been erected for the worship of the Most High. An humbler church had once stood on its site, and many souls had tasted the mercy of God within its walls. But wealth had flowed in upon it, and rich men had clustered round it; and "they pulled it down, and built a greater." The new, majestic temple was adorned within and without, indeed, art and taste might be said to be here personified. The broad aisles were carpeted, the capacious pews were cushioned, and every convenience that luxury could desire might here be found. I saw a crowd of rich and great men there, for the time had come when the choice and fashionable pews were to be sold to the highest bidder. Five hundred, eight hundred, nay a thousand dollars rang on my ears; and the "chief seats" in the holy place became the possession of the proud and wealthy, and they rejoiced in attaining the object of their ambition.

I turned away, for, from some unaccountable cause my heart hung heavy in my bosom, and my eye fell upon a withered, decrepit old woman, who drew near slowly, and with evident tokens of pain, resulting from the effort. She was all alone in this world—in her childhood she had been an orphan, in her womanhood she had married, but her husband's wearing and arduous labours had laid him in an early grave; her children—she had but two—bloomed a little while, and died, and joined their father; and now she was known and loved by none but her Saviour, and a few whose condition was akin to hers. She had come to obtain a solitary sitting—she needed no more in the holy temple of her God. But she was poor, and they bade her stand aside. They judged her by her dress; they quite forgot that heaven's jewels in this world are often meanly set to preserve them from injury and defacement. Unmurmuringly she waited. The proud men left the church, and those who bartered the seats of the Lord's house went out one by one; and the last was also going, but as he went he saw the patient, poverty-marked old Christian, looking after him. His conscience smote him—he spoke kindly to her. She made her errand known. He pointed out to her a seat far off in the gallery. A few cents would defray its yearly cost. She thanked him, and departed.

Day followed day; the Sabbath came and went, and months were born and died. I looked for the old saint, and never looked in vain, for in her seat she constantly appeared. Her dress was thin and scant; but still the winter's blast was never cold enough to keep her from the house of prayer; her strength was little, yet the summer's heat did not detain her at her humble home, and on her oaken staff she came to worship Him whose love burned in her heart. Besides, I saw that while she climbed the stairs, a willing lad (I loved his look, and felt assured he was a Sunday scholar,) stood near to lend his arm to aid her trembling steps; and she blessed him so tenderly my eyes had almost wept. Her sight was dim and weak; but still she listened to the preacher whom she could not see, and whom, because her ears were almost deaf, she scarce could hear. The cold wind swept o'er her head whenever the gallery door was opened; but still it seemed the sweetness of the service of her God made her forget all her discomforters.

I marked the rich men's pews; and when the sky was fair, and "the south wind blew softly" in the morning, their seats were filled. Rich feathers, costly clothes, and chains of gold adorned the tender forms of those who sat therein; but when the people rose to pray their eyes they kept unclosed, and round and round they glanced to mark whose dress outshone their own attire; and oft they yawned; and ere the prayer was o'er they sat them down upon the cushioned seats, and turned the pages of a book in crimson bound, and edged around with gold. Then, lo! I turned again to the decrepit Christian woman. Her hands were clasped—her eyes were closed, seemingly lest earthly things should turn her thoughts

from God. Lame though she was, her attitude she reverently kept. And then I thought that she must own some wondrous treasure up in heaven, which made her thus forget this earth, and in her childlessness and widowhood to joy in looking to that world.

Before the exercises of the morning closed I often heard the stamping of proud horses' feet, and the impatient changing of the bit; and when the benediction was pronounced the carriage doors were opened wide, and, entering therein the pompous men rode to their splendid homes. Their pews were empty in the afternoon, as well as when the summer sun beat hotly down, and when the blast of winter smote the earth. And, lo! of these I felt their treasure was on earth; they wore the gold of earth, but had no care to win the glorious crowns of heaven!

The piercing breath of March came o'er the land; and soon I noted, nor sorrowfully, that the ancient Christian faded, and I thought that cough was sent to bring her to her rest, it was so deep, so hollow!—Her seat was vacant! At home she lay upon a couch of straw, and cold and cheerless was the room, and comfort seemed to dwell no where but in her soul. I saw the lovely Sunday scholar there; he often read to her from her old Bible, and just as oft his bright and beautiful eyes were all suffused with tears. Ah! he loved Jesus too! He was an orphan boy, and he felt drawn to her like to a mother. Thus he tended on her till she needed no more care. She died in hope, her body lies in earth, her soul is surely up in glory, for when she died it seemed as if I heard sweet noises, like the voices of heavenly spirits welcoming a wandering, but ransomed sister home.

I lifted up my eyes, and saw a stately dwelling. A line of carriages were drawn up near it—a velvet-plumed hearse, ornamented with chased silver, was now the home of one of those proud men of earth, who passed their Sabbath mornings in the house of God. His "bones were full of marrow," he had departed in the "lusty prime of life." Cut down as in a moment his worldly soul.

Lo! I started from my reverie, and solemnly I turned the pages of my Bible, wherein I read,— "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: for where your treasure is their will your heart be also."

LITERATURE.

NEW WORKS.

Infant Baptism in the Church of England, vindicated by The Rev. R. Graves. London: Painter, pp. 75.

The object of this little work is to place in its real light the verdict of our Church, concerning Infant Baptism; in answer to a recent article in the Church of England Quarterly which represented her as using a reserve in this particular. So far from this, if it be allowed to plain words to express a meaning, she most clearly asserts not only its indispensability to participation in both her other sacraments and christian offices, but also its necessity to salvation, and pleads the command and example of Scripture as her authority; and if she did not this, she must make a most dangerous concession to Rome, by admitting human tradition only, as her warrant. This opinion of the Church, our author most clearly states, and ably vindicates her conduct; for if, as he reasons, Christ authorised his Church to receive members within her fold, she exceeds not her commission in admitting them by Baptism. The object of God's Church in all ages, in Eden, and in its patriarchal times, and under the Jewish dispensation, has been perfectly uniform—by taking in and training up individuals in the exercise of privileges in the household of Grace, to fit them for members in the household of Glory; this purpose Christ recognised—he also recognised children as heirs of heaven; therefore, the Christian Church has the same object as the Jewish, and is bound to admit little children to a participation in the things of the kingdom of God. Baptism is the means of admission; therefore, she has by implication a divine command for Infant Baptism.

But Baptism is, as our author clearly shews, something more than admission into a religious commu-

nity, it is not only a sign to shew a consent to religion, but to make us religious—a mysterious sacrament with vivifying symbols without which we cannot be saved—"a sign of a new birth whereby we are made children of God," to quote the beautiful words our forefathers were used to sing—

"Quem lavacra consecrant
Hic nascitur proles Dei,"

Not that we, any more than Mr. Graves or the Church, assert that baptism converts; it only matures it—the seal that stamps the Christian gold and gives it its value and currency in heaven; but this is a point which the admirable charge of the Bishop of Exeter has left quite fresh on our reader's memory. Mr. Graves, is however, a champion of a different cast of mind to the venerable bishop; his motto seems to be "Let gentleness my strong enforcement be"—to both and every one of our Church defenders in this day of her adversity, we and succeeding ages are deeply obliged, and certainly, if the learning and zeal of her advocates can save and elevate her, we have no need to despair, even though the too hasty zeal of friends and the cold sectarian views of some who call themselves her sons, sometimes make us fear for her safety.—*Cons. Jour.*

Church of England Quarterly Review.—October.—London: W. E. Painter. 342, Strand.

Although only the 12th number, there is a character about this periodical, which leads us to anticipate that it will shortly become a very important organ of the Church. Published as it is, only four a-year, the reader has a right to expect (and will not be disappointed in his expectation) articles of a soberer and less fugitive description, than are generally found in publications of more frequent appearance. All the articles in the present number are well written, contain much original matter, and are evidently the productions of men well qualified to wield a pen in defence of our much assailed Establishment. The third is written in review of a work called *Secession Justified*, the author of which, among a vast number of other charges, endeavours to fasten the sin of persecution on the English Church; and in proof of this, in modern times, alludes to the cases of the two dissenting churchwardens, who were committed to prison for the non-performance of their duties. "The very allusion," says the reviewer, "to these cases proves that the writer is actuated by a spirit of animosity towards the Church. What has the Church of England to do with the business? The men were committed to prison by the civil power, not by the ecclesiastical; and their offence was an offence against the laws of the land. What are the facts of the case? Two dissenters, conscientious and honest dissenters, seek the office of Churchwardens, for it would not, nor could it, have been imposed upon them against their inclinations; and they seek it for the purpose of annoying the Clergyman and injuring the Church. In undertaking the office, they solemnly engaged to perform duties which they did not perform and never meant to perform. Now the law of the land, as a matter of course, enforces performance of the duties of the office; and under these circumstances, the Clergyman had no alternative but to insist on the performance of the duties. They refused to do what they had solemnly engaged, and thereby incurred the penalty inflicted, not by the Church, but by the State."

While we are able to speak in terms of high commendation of the present number of this Periodical, we are nevertheless constrained to regret the spirit of its first article. It appears that a person signing himself "a Member of the Established Church," sent a series of letters to the *John Bull* newspaper, with which he was so highly delighted that he collected, and published them under the title of "Evangelicalism, generally; and more especially as it exists in the parish St. Mary, Isington." We have not, and most likely shall never read these letters; but we regret the temper and spirit of the notice of them in the *Church of England Quarterly*. Yet in this article there are many things well deserving of serious consideration; particularly the remarks on the character of the hymns sung in some churches—hymns which are certainly oftentimes very objectionable, and unwelcome to good taste.—*Ibid.*

* From the Presbyterian.