

## MISCELLANY.

## SPRING.

Gentle spring has come with all its ethereal mildness. The sun with its powerful rays has melted the fleecy covering and warmed the earth that it may receive cultivation in due time. The fostering breezes blow; the softening showers descend, and exuberant nature is clothed in green, and smiles in various hues. The groves put forth their buds and unfold them by degrees till the whole forest is displayed in full luxuriance. At this renovating season all nature seems to revive and music wakes all around us. We are enchanted with the rapturous and joyful melody of the feathered songsters. The messenger of the morning rises up at the dawn of day, and with joyful notes calls the tuneful nations, who with their glad notes of undissembled joy, unite in the celebration of this charming season.

What a happy world this would be if man answered the great end of his creation as well as the birds of the air, who are taught only by instinct. Can we cease to contemplate with admiration and delight the effects produced in the vegetable world by that Unseen One whose unremitting energy pervades, orders, and sustains all his works. Though unseen, yet he appears in all his majesty and splendor in the revolving seasons. Will not man awake and enjoy the cool, the fragrant, and the silent hour, whose freshness breathes meditation, before the powerful king of day pours forth his shining rays, and the busy multitude go out to pursue their domestic avocations. We cannot forbear to join the universal smile of nature, if our hearts are right, where every breeze is peace, and every grove is melody.—The industrious and pious husbandman, as he walks amidst the glad creation, scattering his seed into the furrows, muses praise. His heart is filled with lively gratitude as he consigns his treasures to the fields, trusting in Him who hath said, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that, or whether they shall be both alike good."

From the Christian Watchman.

## THEATRICAL EXHIBITIONS

In consequence of an application to the General Court by persons in Salem to be incorporated as proprietors of a Theatre in that town, the influence of these amusements on society has within a few days become the topic of much conversation in our city. It has very specially cited the attention of our Legislature, and elicited in the House some very excellent remarks. An act of incorporation was in the last week denied a third reading. On Tuesday, a motion to reconsider this measure was discussed.

Mr. Appleton, of Boston, in some brief observations much to the point, exhibited the utter uselessness of theatrical entertainments. He did not consider them as called for by the present state of society, and that there were many other methods of passing our evenings, which were much more improving, and better suited to our intellectual nature. He was therefore decidedly opposed to reconsidering the vote which negatived the bill.

Mr. Phillips, of Salem, and Mr. Merrick, of Worcester, spoke in favor of reconsidering; but their reasonings were not convincing. They seemed to avoid the argument of moral tendency, as in their view irrelevant, and to rely upon that of expediency.

Mr. Baylies, of Taunton, was also in favor of reconsidering. As a reply to the gentleman who contended that the Drama was corrupting to the moral feeling of the community, he adverted to a season in which he attended the Theatre, and witnessed the presence of some of the leading men in our national and state governments. He also spoke of the distinguished men and moralists, who had written for these exhibitions; not only the immortal Shakspeare, whose diversified genius and talent were unrivalled, but the rigid moralists of England, Dr. Johnson, and the man of chastened purity both in style and manners, Mr. Addison. Would such men, said Mr. Baylies, countenance a school of immorality?

To the idea of setting aside in this discussion, the question of the moral tendency of the Drama, Mr. Shaw, of the Lanesborough, replied, that we can-

not do this. Our code of legislation universally recognises the care of public morals. It is a trust confided to the body politic, which must be conscientiously and sacredly guarded. As to the conduct of leading men in political life, occasionally witnessing these exhibitions, it proved neither the good nor the bad influence of these amusements. Could it be made to appear that distinguished political men never committed errors, their practices might be safely brought as an example; but not till then. Mr. Shaw said, that it had been stated on that floor, that theatrical exhibitions had proved of important moral benefit in the city of New Orleans; that it had drawn from the grog-shop vices, many of the dwellers in that city; that it had superseded the inhuman diversion of bull-baiting, and had attracted multitudes from the gaming-table, and the house of ill-fame. But, said Mr. Shaw, admitting this to be true, will it be said, that because the most dissolute of an unrestrained and vicious population have exchanged a low and degrading vice, for another more refined, that this will prove any thing in the case? Shall the enlightened and moral society of Salem, be placed on the same level with the ignorant and the dissolute of New Orleans? The idea cannot be admitted. The gentleman from Taunton, said Mr. Shaw, has told us of great and wise men who have written for the Drama. But where are the productions of which he speaks? We do not find on our shelves, we do not see exhibited at our Theatres, the moral pieces of Johnson, or the chaste dramatic works of Addison. They are banished by the low taste of the devotees of the Theatre. These great men might have hoped to effect a reform; but their labors were in vain. The genius of the Drama has resisted every such effort. Its nature does not admit of reform; for reform would destroy it. We have been told of the best and most ingenious men who have written for the Theatre; but why have we not been told of those of a different character,—of those whose polluted and obscene comedies have disgusted the lowest grades in society, and whose low and grovelling wit, it is a disgrace to eulogize?

Mr. Hilliard, of Cambridge, very decidedly condemned the Theatre as now conducted, and alluded to the exhibitions in our own city, in which there was a manifest tendency to degeneracy. This legislature had been told, that the establishment incorporated last session was to afford a specimen of high reform. No such purpose, however, had been effected; but a gross degeneracy was apparent; and he hoped that this degeneracy, rapidly increasing in our cities, would be frowned on by public opinion, as it now is by the wise and the good.

## THE SCEPTICAL YOUNG OFFICER:

BY THE REV. DR. JOHN MASON,  
of New-York.

Every one has remarked the mixed, and often ill-assorted company which meets in a public packet or stage-coach. The conversation, with all its variety, is commonly insipid, frequently disgusting, and sometimes insufferable. There are exceptions.—An opportunity now and then occurs of spending an hour in a manner not unworthy of rational beings; and the incidents of a stage-coach produce or promote salutary impressions.

A few years ago, one of the stages which ply between our two principal cities, was filled with a group which could never have been drawn together by mutual choice. In the company was a young man of social temper, affable manners, and considerable information. His accent was barely sufficient to show that the English was not his native tongue, and a very slight peculiarity in the pronunciation of the *th* ascertained him to be a Hollander. He had early entered into military life; had borne both a Dutch and a French commission; had seen real service, had travelled; was master of the English language; and evinced, by his deportment, that he was no stranger to the society of gentlemen. He had, however, in a very high degree, a fault too common among military men, and too absurd to find an advocate among men of sense,—he swore profanely and incessantly.

While the horse was changing, a gentleman who sat on the same seat with him took him by the arm, and requested the favour of his company in a short walk. When they were so far retired as not to be overheard, the former observed, "Although I have

not the honour of your acquaintance, I perceive, Sir, that your habits and feelings are those of a gentleman, and that nothing can be more repugnant to your wishes than giving unnecessary pain to any of your company." He started, and replied, "most certainly, Sir! I hope I have committed no offence of that sort."

"You will pardon me," replied the other, "for pointing out an instance in which you have not altogether avoided it."

"Sir," said he, "I shall be much your debtor for so friendly an act: for, upon my honour, I cannot conjecture in what I have transgressed."

"If you, Sir, continued the former, "had a very dear friend to whom you were under unspeakable obligations, should you not be deeply wounded by any disrespect to him, or even by showing his name introduced and used with a frequency of repetition and a levity of air incompatible with the regard due to his character?"

"Undoubtedly, and I should not permit it! but I know not that I am chargeable with indecorum to any of your friends."

"Sir, my God is my best friend, to whom I am under infinite obligations. I think you must recollect that you have very frequently, since we commenced our journey, taken his name in vain. This has given to me and to others of the company excruciating pain."

"Sir," answered he, with very ingenuous emphasis, "I have done wrong. I confess the impropriety. I am ashamed of a practice which I am sensible has no excuse: but I have imperceptibly fallen into it, and I really swear without being conscious that I do so. I will endeavour to abstain from it in future; and, as you are next to me on the seat, I shall thank you to touch my elbow as often as I trespass." This was agreed upon: the horn sounded, and the travellers resumed their places.

In the space of four or five miles the officers' elbow was joggled every few seconds. He always coloured, but bowed, and received the hint without the least symptom of displeasure: and in a few miles more so mastered his propensity to swearing, that not an oath was heard from his lips for the rest, which was the greater part of the journey.

He was evidently more grave; and having ruminated some time, after surveying first one and then another of the company, turned to his admonisher, and addressed him thus:—

"You are a Clergyman, I presume, Sir."

"I am considered as such." He paused: and then, with a smile, indicated his disbelief in divine Revelation, in a way which invited conversation on this subject.

"I have never been able to convince myself of the truth of Revelation."

"Possibly not. But what is your difficulty?"

"I dislike the nature of its proofs. They are so subtle, so distant; so wrapped in mystery; so metaphysical; that I get lost, and can arrive at no certain conclusion."

"I cannot admit the fact to be as you represent it. My impressions are altogether different. Nothing seems to be more plain and popular; more level to every common understanding; more remote from all cloudy speculation, or teasing subtleties, than some of the principal proofs of divine revelation. They are drawn from great and incontestible facts; they are accumulating every hour; they have grown into such a mass of evidence, that the supposition of its falsehood is infinitely more incredible than any one mystery in the volumes of Revelation, or even than all their mysteries put together. Your inquiries, Sir, appear to have been unhappily directed.—But what sort of proof do you desire, and what would satisfy you?"

"Such proofs as accompany physical science. This I have always loved; for I never find it deceive me. I rest upon it with entire conviction. There is no mistake, and can be no dispute in mathematics. And if a Revelation comes from God, why have we not such evidence for it as mathematical demonstration?"

"Sir, you are too good a philosopher not to know, that the nature of evidence must be adapted to the nature of its object: that if you break in upon this adaptation, you will have no evidence at all; seeing that evidence is no more interchangeable than objects. If you ask for mathematical evidence, you must confine yourself to mathematical disquisitions. Your subject must be quantity. If you wish to pur-