

LETTERS FROM HELL.

HERE we have a book with a terrible title, and more terrible than its title. It is a chamber of horrors and flowers. The writer reveals a wonderful energy of imaginative and descriptive power, linked with an epistolary ease and naturalness, which produce a startlingly vivid effect upon the reader. In these thirty letters from hell, the horrors of the state described are pictured with such power and with such a regard for the law of continuity, that one is compelled to feel that "something like this may be." This dread existence is represented as simply the projection of the sinful life in this world. It is called "the world of consequences." No brimstone and flame are mentioned. It is the memory of buried hopes, of the selfishness and narrowness of life, of its wasted opportunities, the sad knowledge of "how blessedly fruitful life might have been," the continued delusions of sin, the reign of the law of habit, which holds the soul with an iron grasp and "impels each wretched being, with an irresistible impulse, to imitate his life on earth," and the unquenchable desires that rage in the heart, which make the hell described in these pages.

The horrible, and the pathetic and tender, mingle strangely and continuously in the book. The painful description of the agonies of the sorrowing spirit as it feels the force of "the moving springs of hell, insatiate desire on the one side and remorse on the other," linger like a spell upon the heart, and one must be moved almost to tears, to step out of the awful shadows of despair into the bright and saintly presence of Aunt Betty, whom the lost soul remembers, and is blest in remembering, or into the sunshine which surrounds the angelic character of Lily, and the pathetic interest awakened by the trustfulness and beauty of ruined Annie.

Aunt Betty was one who had given her life for others, and she shed the aroma of a holy life wherever she went. She is seen on the bright side of "the great gulf." Placed in cold contrast to her, is one whom the lost soul used to call "mother," a perfect lady, eminently proper in everything, faultless in