

Choice Literature.

CHOICE.

"Oh, I don't want to do that!" she cried, as, after having left the car, they took their way down into the park.

"Very well," he acquiesced, "don't do it unless you had rather."

She looked at him a moment from under her broad hat, and then asked, half smiling:

"Do you really want me to go?"

"Not unless you choose."

"But you know I shall choose if you really desire it."

"No, don't go, unless you prefer to do so, and you have said you did not. I was inconsiderate, perhaps, to ask it."

"No, indeed, you were not. On the whole, I think I had rather go."

They walked on a little distance in silence. He glanced at her gratefully and a little quizzically from time to time. It was a fair May day. The oaks against the clear blue sky turned their burnished leaves to the sunlight and wind; their dark stems and limbs stood out in distinct relief against the green slopes of the undulating park, and spring flowers strewn the mossy carpet at their feet. Presently he began to laugh.

"What a woman you are!"

"What is the matter now?"

"Why, you know we were talking the other day about choice, and you have put it all in a nutshell."

"I don't see how."

"It is quite plain. Of course I believe you are sincere in saying you had rather go to Aunt Maggie's since I want you to; but, if I did not, you may as well confess you had much rather stay away."

She peered up in his face inquisitively a moment, and then slipped her hand gayly in his arm, there were only the trees and flowers to see.

"But since you want me to go—"

"Yes, there it is," he exclaimed. "Since there is some other motive stronger than your dislike of going, you prefer to go. Don't you see it is the same way with everything? Nobody does anything that, given the circumstances, he had not rather do than leave undone."

"I don't see it a bit more than the other day," she maintained, refractorily. "It is a very different matter for me to like to do what you wish, than for you to like to stay down at that stuffy old office on Saturday when the others leave ever so much earlier."

"I grant you that the motives are different, but the principle is exactly the same. If I stay down there when I might be with you, it is because, all things considered, I had rather stay!"

"I thank you," she cried, withdrawing her hand and putting on an air of great offended dignity.

"Oh, now, you needn't play the abused when you know as well as I do that I prefer to stay there because in that way I get nearer the goal of being with you all the time."

She allowed herself to be mollified by this, and in a moment they were walking on again easily side by side, and he had reverted to his former topic.

"For an illustration of choice in its plainest aspect," he said, "take your and my attitude toward each other. You have chosen me in preference to far richer and perhaps more worthy suitors (though I'm not going to admit that). Each is his own favourite in love, you know; but, at any rate, you have chosen me, and why? Simply because you prefer to undertake a life with me than a life with one of them."

"I might possibly manage to exist without any of you!" she said, loftily. "No indeed! There was no question of a competitive examination and an averaging of qualities," she went on, with considerable scorn. "I don't beneve any girl with a heart ever did that way;—and you know I have a heart," she added, with winsome grace.

"Have or had?" he asked.

"Thank you. I have a very good one; it used to call itself yours."

"And is glad to do so no longer," he responded, heartily.

"But now, why do you suppose I chose you?"

"Because you couldn't help it, sir?"

"Very true," he said, fervently. "there was simply no question about it. That is the way with all our supreme choices; they are the spontaneous demands of our whole nature. But with lesser choices there comes in what you well call the competitive examination system, when we reason about the matter at all. So many reasons for this course of action; so many reasons for that; and we choose accordingly. Often, of course, we don't argue the matter, but whether we choose consciously or unconsciously. I say nobody does anything, from getting up in the morning to going to bed at night, that he hadn't rather do than not."

"And I say I don't agree with you at all. There are many things we endure: we submit to them simply because we must, not because we like them."

"Oh, I don't say 'like'! To choose a thing and to take pleasure in our choice are two quite different things. I maintain merely that we do whatever we choose, and we do nothing else."

"But why do you maintain such an absurd statement?" she cried, with some irritation. "If I could choose, do you think I'd go to the horrid old seashore instead of staying here, where I had rather be?"

She bent to pluck some fine white flowers as if she had not said something to make him look at her with a warm light in his eyes. Or was it, perhaps, just because she had so spoken?

"What makes you go, then, if you had rather stay here?" he asked, when they were strolling on again.

"Why, you know I can't help it!" she said, looking up at him with an aggrieved surprise. "The house is shut up and all my friends are away—why, how could I stay?"

"There are hotels and boarding-houses," he suggested, keeping his eyes on the flowers he bent with his cane as he passed.

"Hotels and boarding-houses?" she repeated, stopping short in amazement. "What do you mean?"

She tried to look in his face; but it was his turn now to gather some flowers.

"You could be very comfortable in a boarding-house," he

persisted, while he was plucking a rather heterogeneous bouquet.

"I don't know what you mean by your 'boarding-house'!" she exclaimed, with some asperity. "Stand up, sir, and explain."

He obeyed; but his explanation was not altogether ingenuous. "Don't you see," he said, looking at his buttercups and daisies; "if you really had rather stay here than go away, there are plenty of ways you could do it. Ever so many people do, but, take it all in all, you prefer to go."

"Of course I prefer to go rather than to do anything out of the way. What would people think of me if I stayed?"

"There it is!" he exclaimed, meeting her eyes, triumphantly. "That motive is stronger than your desire to stay—and so away you go."

"You wicked creature!" she exclaimed, starting forward again. "Aren't you ashamed to bother me so just for an argument?"

"Not a bit: for I want you to agree with me, and you require a few object lessons. Do you admit now that you don't do anything except what you prefer to do?"

"Oh, if you call that choice"—she said, disdainfully.

"Certainly I do, when, all things considered, you adopt that line of action in preference to any other. The fact proves the statement."

"Perhaps you think, then, that when a man starves to death, the fact of his starving proves that he chose deliberately to do so."

Hampton hesitated a moment. "Well, that is rather an extreme case; but, on the whole, I think my theory will stand it. Yes, I do think the man who starves chooses to do so."

"Nonsense!" she cried.

"Wait a minute. I don't mean that he chose starvation consciously, but that he chose to live the life which led to starvation. It isn't this moment's choice that decides the question, understand; it is the series of choices made day after day. Anything that we have to endure, be it pain, sorrow, disease, even death, is the result of choice, conscious or unconscious. Wise choice consists in not choosing what will bring hard consequences, but choosing what will give lasting happiness."

"But how can we choose not to die, for instance? I don't see that your argument has a leg to stand upon."

"On the contrary, I think it has a pair of very stout legs. Intelligence gives us the power to choose according to our permanent desires, whereas ignorance makes us choose only according to the momentary impulse. If an animal browsing about here should eat a poisonous plant, it would be because he chose that especial bit out of all the park affords, and he would die a consequence. It is the same way with humanity. If we overfeed or underfeed, or overstrain or underexercise, or lead a life in any way not strictly in accordance with physical and psychical laws (not a tithe of which do we know anything about now, we must surely die). But when we know all the laws and choose in conformity with them, there is no reason why we should die. You know Dr. Hammond has been telling us so of late."

"Oh yes, but that is like the recipe for catching birds—put salt in their tails. Since we are ignorant of most of the laws of nature and life, we can't choose in conformity with them; therefore choice has nothing to do with the matter."

"But our ignorance is continually being transformed into intelligence," he responded eagerly, his face alight with interest and satisfaction. "We are bound to choose, we must choose; life is by necessity a perpetual choice; and in this way we are all the time experimenting, and have been since the world began. Millions have lost their lives, both physically and spiritually; but they leave an increasing amount of knowledge for those who come after. You see, it is not alone the individual that chooses, but the race. It goes all through society and humanity. Every man can cripple or aid his neighbour. The members of a family interact upon one another and control the choice of the individual, as you showed a while ago"—she looked at him reproachfully—"the nation makes demands and issues commands and the people choose as a body corporate to obey. See how it was in the War. The soldiers on either side were not particularly in love with wounds, and fevers, and amputations, and prisons, and death; but they liked them very much better than submission to demands which they thought evil or unjust; and so many thousands of persons were cut off from individual choice by that corporate choice. And yet it always comes back to the individual, and the whole object of government is to put such penalties on the side of evil-doing and such incentives on the side of well-doing, that the individual will find he prefers to do right. The reason why government does not always succeed is because the component parts of the body corporate don't know entirely what is right and therefore cannot make adequate decrees. Of course the State as an organism is a whole which could not exist but for the parts, and depends for its welfare upon them."

They walked on some distance in silence; Hampton thinking of the great political issues his train of thought had brought to mind, and at the same time hearing the soft wind through the trees and admiring the variegated green of the vista ahead of them; but Gladys hardly noticed anything, so absorbed was she in her own meditations. At last she looked up, with her grey eyes full of light and trustfulness, and said—

"I don't know but that you are right. I have been thinking on from where you left off. The individual and the family and the State are all led by choice, you say; then the Church must choose also; God must choose. And He cannot choose anything except what is perfect, what is right and true and good. Therefore He must choose these for the universe, as you say government tries to do; only God knows how. I remember Dr. Holland's saying the other day that life was like a plain full of morasses and prickly plants, but with a firm path winding through it on which one could walk securely. Everyone thinks he sees a nearer way, or something attractive lures him from the path into the morass or among the nettles, he can go astray if he choose, but he finds it so uncomfortable to do so that he tries to get back to the path and often has to go through an actual thicket of nettles to do so; yet that is his only way out."

"A very good comparison. I wish government had a little more wisdom about guarding the path."

"Yes, I was thinking of that. You know you said the whole could not exist save for the parts; now don't you think it is equally true that the parts couldn't exist save for the whole? The body, for instance, may be here with every

organ and limb perfect, and yet if life leaves it—life, that which is not a part but equally in all parts—the body disintegrates and falls into decay and dust."

"Very true, my clever philosopher," said Hampton, approvingly. "Of course God is the life which co-ordinates all our parts and makes them capable of living. He chooses, else we could not choose; and the reason why His choice is absolutely wise is because He sees the end from the beginning; and the reason why it is perfectly good is because wisdom sees good as the aim of all and forwards it throughout the whole process."

"Then all we have to do is to bring our intelligence and will into conformity with God's and we shall be wise and good also."

"Yes, that is all," said Hampton, looking down at his slender young betrothed with a smile of much tenderness. "That is all, but it will take an eternity to accomplish."

"Perhaps," she responded, but not at all in a depressed tone. "And it is just as well; for we should not like to think we were going to arrive at the final end of our whole ambition to-morrow or next day; we should be sighing for new worlds to conquer; whereas now, so long as we go upward, there is no danger of satiety and ennui. Besides, eternity is already well begun in this little segment of it, and so we can work with encouragement at the problem of how to choose well."

They had reached the top of a hill which looked off over a sunny verdant country; but they preferred to rest in the shade for awhile, so they turned down into a little dell, fragrant with wild grape blossoms, and were soon ensconced cozily at the foot of a big tree luxuriating in the delicious air and woodland odours.—*Leonora B. Halsted, in the N. Y. Independent.*

THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

THE MISSIONARY OUTLOOK IN CENTRAL AFRICA.

Slowly but surely the Christian Church is effecting an entrance into the great Dark Continent, approaching it on all sides. Every section and branch of the Church is represented in this enterprise, and a very considerable expenditure of money and men is being made with what promises to be certain ultimate success.

The obstacles that lie in the African missionary's pathway are very great. Should he confine his work to the coast or its neighbourhood, he has formidable difficulties, arising from climate and the character of the natives, to combat with; and if, not content with this, he pushes forward and begins to penetrate the vast interior, these difficulties are multiplied tenfold. The distances to be travelled, the difficulty of transport, the nature of large tracts of the country which it is necessary for him to pass through, the absence of anything deserving the name of roads, increase the arduousness of his undertaking. Even when he has surmounted all these, and has reached that part of the interior in which he intends to settle, he is still confronted by the permanent problem of adjusting his mode of living to the requirements of the climate, so as to preserve a fair measure of health and strength. This problem is one that, at present, is only partially solved. It is, however, being solved, and the last six or seven years have witnessed a marked improvement. Dr. Mather, of our own Lake Tanganyika Mission, is strongly of opinion that no European should remain in Central Africa, for a longer term than five years, without change, either to England or to some other equally good climate. The Presbyterian missionaries on Lake Nyassa are, he affirms, decidedly in favour of this same rule, and Dr. Laws, Dr. Elmsley and Dr. Bowie not only support it in theory, but practically adopt it. Even the Roman Catholic missionaries have learnt that it is imprudent for men to stay too long, and are now beginning to send home their invalids instead of letting them remain in Central Africa to drop slowly into the grave, as was the practice of their immediate predecessors.

Then, in addition to the above, there is the great obstacle to steady progress which arises from the shifting nature of the population, partly in consequence of deficient food supply, but mainly because of the uncertainty of life and the terrible evils of slavery and slave-raiding expeditions. What is a thriving village to-day may be a deserted one or a heap of ruins to-morrow.

Nor can we, in estimating the difficulties of progressive Christian work in Africa, overlook the sad fact that even the rivalry and jealousy of different branches of the Christian Church are already operating powerfully as hindrances and deterrents. The recent troubles in Uganda testify to this; and although the full reports now to hand altogether disprove the early assertions of the Roman Catholic missionaries and, although those missionaries and those natives whom they influence have received a severe check which should teach them a useful lesson, still one fears that the very system which the Roman Catholic missionaries are adopting will lead to a repetition of such troubles in the future.

In spite, however, of all these drawbacks, substantial progress is being made. Christianity is a power in Uganda, notwithstanding the painful incidents of the last few months, and the onlooker has every reason to hope that it will exert a yet more potent influence in the near future.

The Presbyterian Missions on or near Lake Nyassa show decided signs of prosperity and growth. Our Baptist brethren on the Congo, although still tried in faith and courage by the loss of good and tried workers, are gradually raising up a Christian community, and extending their work in new directions. The same may be said of the Congo-Balolo Mission. Cardinal Lavignerie's White Fathers now possess a number of strong stations, scattered, one may say, all over Equatorial Africa. Their mode of operations, which admits of the purchase of children for training in their schools, and