

GENERAL LITERATURE.

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MIS-SPENT HOURS.

THOUGH scarcely a day passes over our heads, without bringing death before our view in some form or other, sparing neither the young nor middle-aged, neither the weak nor the strong; severing the nearest ties; leaving thousands of weeping—and many perhaps quite desolate—beings; yet, how little serious attention do the young, and I fear I may add many of maturer years, give to the melancholy details, and heart-rending instances, that are so constantly meeting the eye and ear. Though, when we reflect that our own days are numbered, and we know not how soon we may be called to a fearful reckoning, in the presence of an offended God; even, perhaps, before another day is done, we may be laid on the bed of death; is it not wonderful, that our feelings should be thus stoical—thus callous—upon an event that, sooner or later, must be the end of all? Unless death appears amongst our own immediate circle of relations and friends, we heed not the devastation around us, but heedlessly continue in the same course, pursue the same series of amusements, and project new plans for our future advancement, though each succeeding year, we probably have lost some one or other of the companions of the preceding one, who were engaged with us in the like pursuits.

Some few years have now elapsed, since, buoyant with youth, health, and spirits, I set out, accompanied with two beautiful girls, to call for our chaperone, who was to attend us to a ball at Grosvenor square. I forget the reasons that prevented either of our mothers from performing that office, but so it was, and girl-like, we beguiled the drive from Cumberland Place, with anticipating the supposed delights of the expected ball, which was, of course, to be gayer and more delightful than ever a ball had been before. My lovely companions were likewise much engrossed with the idea of an entertainment that their mother proposed giving for their amusement, and various opinions were given and asked, as to the probable number that would fill the rooms, and the important query of who was, and who was not to be invited, was fully discussed. We drank tea with our chaperone, who resided at Albemarle street, and she laughingly declared her smiling trio would certainly bear the bell that evening. We proceeded to the ball in high spirits, and hardly had we made our entry into the well filled rooms, when my companions and myself were engaged for the commencing quadrille, and continued dancing until supper was announced, with all the glee of mirth's happiest votaries. After supper, our chaperone ventured to propose our returning home, as she was sadly tired. "Return home! why the evening is only just begun; indeed, dear madam," was the thoughtless exclamation of three young hearts, who had yet their lesson to learn of this world's fleeting joys—"we cannot leave the ball so early." Our kind friend good-humouredly consented to forget her fatigues in our behalf, and remained even until I, though by no means, in those days, the steadiest of the trio, thought it but right to induce my pretty companions to bid adieu to the giddy maze of pleasure, which had so infatuated our simple minds.

It so chanced, owing to different circumstances, that I saw little more of Laura and Eveleen M——, before we left town; and the first tidings I received of them, after we were settled in the country, brought the intelligence that Laura was shortly going to be married, and that it was a match most highly approved of by her friends. Congratulations and presents were pouring in from all quarters; Laura was the happiest of the happy! I also heard, that she, with her family, were going on a visit to the future father-in-law's house, to be present at a fete about to be given in the honour of the approaching nuptials; for Arthur G—— was an only son, young, rich, and handsome, and in the expectation of soon becoming the beloved husband of a lovely, loving, and bright-eyed bride, and who would not say but that much happiness was in store for him? Poor, short-sighted mortals as we are, who can tell what trials await us?—trials, indeed, sent but in mercy to remind us that this world is not our abiding place; that all have suffered, that all will

suffer, in this their transient state—a state only intended to fit us for another, and a happier sphere. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away.

The fete took place—Weippert's band played its best—garlands of variegated lamps illumined the surrounding scenery—emblems of felicity covered the floor, chalked in the most approved style of excellence; in fact, all the usual agreements, attendant on such a scene, were there; nothing had been neglected, nothing omitted that could do honour to the especial occasion. But where was the fair girl, in whose favour all these delights had been collected? She, poor thing, was dressed and ready, when, alas! ere she could leave her apartment, she was taken so seriously ill, as to be wholly unable to grace the festive throng with her presence. She continued ill, very ill, for some time; then we heard there was a change, and for the better, and the lover urged that the marriage should not be longer delayed. The family removed to the sea-side, whilst lawyers and milliners were engaged in active preparation.

Arthur G—— was hourly expected to arrive to claim his still lovely bride; but the awful decree had gone forth—that decree from which there is no appeal. In this world they were to meet no more! He arrived late one evening at H——, and hastened to the house; alas! it was but to find that fair creature he had loved so well—perhaps too well—a corpse! It was but too true; the beautiful, the highly connected, the richly affianced Laura M—— was no more. All her family had considered her health so fast approaching towards convalescence, that they could hardly be convinced of the melancholy reality, for she went off in a fainting fit, when apparently as well as usual, and never revived again. This sudden and sad event occurred only a few hours previous to her lover's arrival.

There was something peculiarly awful in this beautiful, elegant creature being thus suddenly snatched away, just entering upon the threshold of life's brightest pathway. She had barely numbered nineteen summers, and hardly six months had elapsed since the evening I have mentioned of those mis-spent hours—past hours not to be recalled. O could we but have foreseen how short the interval between us and the grave, how different would our young hearts have been affected—how empty and unsatisfactory would this world's pass-away joys have appeared to our heaven-directed vision. Why are we thus blind, thus careless, when we know not how soon we may be summoned away from all we prize on earth, to give an account of each moment of time? How precious would such moments be, if they could but be recalled; how have we trifled away years, days, and hours, in passing forgetfulness of the "one thing needful!"

Who can be thoughtless, who can be devoted to the pleasures of this life, with such warnings of the uncertainty of human happiness? But a few short months had passed away, and the friend of our thoughtless hours was gone from amongst us, no longer an inhabitant of this earth, no longer a sharer in the pursuits which once were followed with such zest; alike indifferent to praise or pleasure, the lively, animated being, who so lately trod the earth in health and beauty, now lay mouldering in the grave, where all things are alike forgotten and forgot. O, may such warnings be remembered ere it be too late to profit by them!

In one short year, Eveleen M—— became a wife; and another had scarcely passed away, and she was a widow—and the same gravestone covered her husband and infant boy!

Arthur G—— was no more—gone to his last home, that bourne from which no traveller returns.

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart."

If the young would but reflect on the many changes that daily and hourly occur—changes which are so constantly altering and disarranging the fondest schemes, and destroying the brightest hopes, surely this life would appear in its true light, only to be considered as a passage to another and a better world—not for our precious moments to be frittered away in frivolity and

amusement, incapacitating the mind from higher and holier pursuits. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Do not let us shut our eyes wilfully to such a state of varying change—let us rather pray that "we be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

It is doubtless mercifully ordained, that we should not brood too deeply on sorrows over which we have no controul—as such feeling, if indulged, would unfit us for the active duties of life; but may our hearts be duly impressed with the one pious thought, which should always be uppermost in the true believer's heart, and which alone can give comfort to the mourner in the earliest stage of suffering, when our spirit is bowed low by the pressure of some heavy trial, "It is the will of God," and may we all, in every trouble of this life with which it shall please the Almighty hand to permit that we should be afflicted, be enabled to say, with humble submission and pious resignation, "Thy will be done;" and may our hearts ever be fixed where true joys are to be found; and may we, through the merits of our blessed Saviour, who died for our sins—who effaced the memory of whole years, nay, centuries of mis-spent hours—so direct our thoughts, that we shall always bear in mind that one startling truth, we are standing on the brink of eternity—we know not in how short a space of time we may be called.

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY.

INTRODUCTION.

THE studies which have the works of God for their subject, are of the utmost importance to young men of leisure, and of an inquisitive mind. They will preserve them from the giddiness and scepticism of the present age; they will furnish them always with subjects for filling up with satisfaction the hours that hang so heavy on the idle and they lay the best foundation for religion and virtue; they will be the means of training them to habits of sobriety and temperance; and the surest path to attain respectability in their respective stations; and will gradually conduct them to peace of mind, to self-satisfaction, and to the purest and most lasting happiness.

Philosophy is one of those terms that have been used in a variety of senses. If we were to limit its sense to the origin of the word, we would call it the love of wisdom; and men, then, who devote themselves to the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom, are to be deemed philosophers. The definition given of it by one, who was himself a celebrated philosopher and orator, is that "it is the knowledge of all things, both divine and human, with their causes." And here we may observe where it differs from natural history. Natural history collects facts, relates different appearances of nature, and arranges them in their separate classes; but the philosopher traces these appearances up to their causes, and endeavours, at the same time, to give a satisfactory account of them.

The title of philosophy was originally assumed on a principle of modesty, and was bestowed on those venerable sages of antiquity, who enlightened the world with knowledge and science, enforced the interests of virtue by their writings, and recommended its practice by the regularity of their lives.

In later times, this venerable title has been so shamefully prostituted, that it is now become almost a name of reproach.

But, from its original meaning, philosophy has passed through a variety of changes. It means the successful study of nature, of medicine, of morals, and of the law. It is used even in a looser sense, meaning the propriety and reasonableness of such and such things; and thus every person, that can reason or wrangle, calls himself a philosopher.

Religion, with great justice, puts in her claim to the title of philosophy, as founded on the best