

MISCELLANEOUS.

It Might Have Been.

BY R. KELSO CARTER.

Full often in our lives has come a day
 When, pausing where two paths divergent lay,
 We pondered, deep and long, which one to choose :
 Fearful that, either followed, we might lose
 The rare enjoyment of a happy hour,
 Or grateful incense of a fragrant flower,
 Or glimpse of some fair land where shines the sun
 On giant groves, and where the rivers run
 Through furrowed fields and through the shadowy ranks
 Of cypress trees that weep upon the banks.

We fear to lose so much ; but, knowing not
 The changeful chances of our future lot,
 We set out boldly on the chosen track ;
 And then—so often, comes the looking back,
 The baffled strife our cherished goal to win.
 The mournful, hopeless cry—"It might have been."

Sometimes the soul, when with great sorrow wrung,
 Recalls a time, long fled, when lightly hung
 The course of future years in fate's great scale ;
 And see how, all unwittingly, an influence frail
 As morning dews that on the grasses gleam
 Destroyed the even balance of the beam,
 Unknown to us the deep decision made,
 And turned our path from sunshine into shade.

A passing thought, a trifling deed :
 A word unspoken in an hour of need.
 Or spoken when 'twere better left unsaid ;
 Some written line that we by chance have read ;
 All these can shift the scene with subtle hand,
 And draw our future from an iron band.

We never think that such a little thing
 Can ever such tremendous sequence bring,
 Until too late ; and then, we backward turn
 The page that we have filled, and dimly burn
 The light of other days, in vain regrets
 For opportunities gone by. The spirit frets
 Against its destiny, and deep within,
 Our hearts we mourn for what we might have been.

Ah ! soul ! look upward, trusting ; kiss the rod ;
 And know there is no "might have been" with God.
 From Him, wherever lowly we draw near,
 We learn of love that casteth out all fear ;
 We find a faith that, in oblivion's sea,
 Whelms every dread and doubt eternally ;
 A hope unfaltering to us is given ;
 A tender charity, as broad as heaven ;
 A perfect peace : a calm, untroubled rest ;
 Through these, all things seem ever right and best.
 We rise triumphant over death and sin,
 All pain and sorrow in our joy forgot,
 And, looking backward on our "might have been,"
 Thank God that it was not.

Marry a Gentleman.

Marry a gentleman,
 Girls, if you can.
 Gentle and tender
 Though no less a man.
 One who will treasure
 His child or his wife,
 Scorning to rob them
 Of sweetness in life,

One who will never
 The brute's part assume,
 Filling his household
 With sorrow and gloom,
 If on love's altar,

The flame you would fan,
 Marry a gentleman,
 Girls, if you can.

You will be happy,
 And you will be glad,
 Though he should only
 Be commonly clad.
 Pleasure is fleeting,
 And life but a span—
 Marry a gentleman,
 Girls, if you can.

The Sunday Morning's Dream.

My first day of returning health, after many weeks of severe illness, was a bright Sunday in June. I was well enough to sit at an open window in my easy chair, and as our house stood in a pleasant garden in the suburbs of London, the first roses of the year scented the soft breeze that fanned my pale cheek, and revived my languid frame. The bells of our parish church were just beginning their chimes, and their familiar sounding awakened in me an intense longing to be with my family once more a worshipper in the house of God. I took up my Bible and Prayer Book, which had been placed ready on the table beside me intending to begin to read when the hour of the 11 o'clock service should be announced by the ceasing of the bells ; and in the meantime closed my eyes and soothed my impatient wishes by picturing to myself the shady avenues of blossoming limes that led to our church, and the throngs that would now be entering it for the public worship of the day.

All at once I seemed to be walking in the beautiful churchyard, yet prevented from gratifying my eager wish to enter the church by some irresistible though unseen hand. One by one the congregation, in their gay Sunday dresses, passed me by, and went in where I vainly strove to follow. The parish children in two long and orderly trains defiled up the staircases in the galleries, and except a few stragglers hurrying in, as feeling themselves late, I was left alone.

Suddenly I was conscious of some awful presence, and I felt myself addressed by a voice of most sweet solemnity in words to this effect:—

"Mortal, who by divine mercy has just been permitted to return from the gates of the grave, pause before thou enterest God's holy house again ; reflect how often thou hast profaned his solemn public worship by irreverence, or by inattention, which is in his sight irreverence ; consider well the great privilege, the unspeakable benefit and blessing of united prayer, lest by again abusing it thou tire the patience of thy long suffering God, and tempt him forever to deprive thee of that which hitherto thou hast so little valued."

Seizing me cast down my eyes and blush with conscious guilt, the gracious being continued in a milder tone :

"I am one of those angels commissioned to gather the prayers of the saints, and form them into wreaths of glorious incense that they may rise to the throne of God. Enter thou with me, and thou shalt, for thy warning, be able to discern those among the devout about to be offered which are acceptable to Him, and to see how few in number, how weak and unworthy they are."

As he ceased speaking I found myself by the side of the angel still, but within the church, and so placed that I could distinctly see every part of the building.

"Observe" said the angel, "that those prayers which come from the heart, and which alone will ascend on high will seem to be uttered aloud. They will be more or less audible in proportion to their earnestness, when the thoughts wander the sounds will grow faint, and even cease altogether."

This, explained to me why the organist, though apparently playing with all his might produced no sound, and why presently after when the service began, though the lips of many moved and all appeared attentive, only a few faint murmurings were heard.

How strange and awful it was to note the sort of death-like silence that prevailed in whole pews, in which as was thus evident, no heart was raised in gratitude to heaven. Even in the *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*, the voices sometimes sank into