

No Sect in Heaven.

(Republished by Request.)

Talking of sects till late one eve,
Of the various doctrines the saints believe,
That night I stood in a troubled dream,
By the side of a darkly flowing stream.

And a "Churchman" down to the river came :
When I heard a strange voice call his name,
"Good father, stop ; when you cross this tide,
You must leave your robes on the other side."

But the aged father did not mind,
And his long gown floated out behind,
As down to the stream his way he took,
His pale hands clasping a gilt-edged book.

"I'm bound for heaven, and when I'm there,
I shall want my book of Common Prayer ;
And though I put on a starry crown,
I should feel quite lost without my gown."

Then he fixed his eye on the shining track,
But his gown was heavy, and held him back,
And the poor old father tried in vain,
A single step in the flood to gain.

I saw him again on the other side,
But his silk gown floated on the tide ;
And no one asked in that blissful spot,
Whether he belonged to "the Church" or not.

Then down to the river a Quaker strayed,
His dress of a sober hue was made ;
"My coat and hat must be all of gray.
I cannot go any other way."

Then he buttoned his coat straight up to his chin,
And staidly, solemnly waded in,
And his broad-brimmed hat he pulled down tight,
Over his forehead so cold and white.

But a strong wind carried away his hat ;
A moment he silently sighed over that,
And then as he gazed to the farther shore,
The coat slipped off and was seen no more.

As he entered heaven his suit of gray
Went quietly sailing—away—away,
And none of the angels questioned him
About the width of his beaver's brim.

Next came Dr. Watts with a bundle of Psalms
Tied nicely up in his aged arms,
And hymns as many, a very wise thing,
That the people in heaven, "all round" might sing.

But I thought that he heaved an anxious sigh,
As he saw that the river ran broad and high,
And looked rather surprised as, one by one,
The Psalms and Hymns in the waves went down.

And after him, with his MSS.,
Came Wesley, the pattern of godliness,
But he cried, "Dear me what shall I do ?
The water has soaked them through and through."

And there on the river, far and wide,
Away they went down the swollen tide,
And the saint, astonished, passed thro' alone,
Without his manuscripts, up to the throne.

Then gravely walking, two saints by name,
Down to the stream together came,
But as they stopped at the river's brink,
I saw one saint from the other shrink.

"Sprinkled or plunged, may I ask you, friend,
How you attained to life's great end ?"
"Thus, with a few drops on my brow,"
"But I have been dipped, as you'll see me now."

"And I really think it will hardly do,
As I'm 'close communion,' to cross with you ;
You're bound, I know, to the realms of bliss,
But you must go that way, and I'll go this."

Then straightway plunging with all his might,
Away to the left—his friend at the right,
Apart they went from this world of sin,
But at last they entered together in.

And now, when the river was rolling on,
A Presbyterian Church went down ;
Of women there seemed an innumerable throng,
But the men I could count as they passed along.

And concerning the road, they could never agree,
The *old* or the *new* way, which it could be,
Nor ever a moment paused to think
That both would lead to the river's brink.

And a sound of murmuring long and loud
Came ever up from the moving crowd,
"You're in the old way, and I'm in the new,
That is the false, and this is the true ;"
Or, "I'm in the old way, and you're in the new,
That is the false, and *This* is true."

But the brethren only seemed to speak,
Modest the sisters walked, and meek,
And if ever one of them chanced to say
What troubles she met with on the way,
How she longed to pass to the other side,
Nor feared to cross the swelling tide,
A voice arose from the brethren then :
"Let no one speak but the 'holy men ;'
For have ye not heard the words of Paul,
'Oh, let the women keep silence all ?'"

I watched them long in my curious dream,
Till they stood by the borders of the stream,
Then, just as I thought, the two ways met,
But all the brethren were talking yet.
And would talk on, till the heaving tide
Carried them over, side by side ;
Side by side, for the way was one.
The toilsome journey of life was done,
And Priest and Quaker, and all who died,
Came out alike on the other side.
No forms, or crosses, or books had they,
No gowns of silk, or suits of gray,
No creeds to guide them, or MSS.
For all had put on Christ's righteousness.