

Miscellany.

SELECTIONS.

THE THREE BIDDERS.

WILL you listen, young friends, for a moment,
While I a story unfold—
A marvellous tale of a wonderful sale
Of a noble lady of old—
How hand and heart, at an auction-mart,
And soul and body, she sold!

'Twas in the broad king's-highway,
Near a century ago,
That a preacher stood, though of noble blood,
Telling the fallen and low
Of a Saviour's love, and a home above,
And a peace that they all might know.

All crowded around to listen;
And they wept at the wondrous love
That could wash their sin, and receive them in
His spotless mansions above;
While slow through the crowd a lady proud
Her gilded chariot drove.

"Make room," cried the haughty outrider;
"You are closing the king's-highway:
My lady is late, and their Majesties wait;
Give way there, good people, I pray."
The preacher heard, and his heart was stirred,
And he cried to the rider, "Nay."

His eyes like the lightning flashes,
His voice like a trumpet rings,
"Your grand fete-days, and your fashions and
ways
Are all but perishing things.
'Tis the king's-highway, but I hold it to-day
In the name of the King of kings."

Then, bending his gaze on the lady,
And making her soft eye fall,
"And now in His name a sale I proclaim,
And bids for this fair lady call.
Who will purchase the whole—her body and
soul,
Coronet, jewels, and all?

"I see already three bidders:
The World steps up as the first—
'I will give her my treasures, and all my pleasures
For which my votaries thirst;
She shall dance through: each day, more joyous
and gay,
With a quiet grave at the worst."

"But out spake the Devil boldly—
The kingdoms of earth are mine.
Fair lady, thy name, with an envied fame,
On their brightest tablets shall shine:
Only give me thy soul, and I give thee the
whole,
Their glory and wealth to be thine."

"And pray what hast Thou to offer,
Thou Man of Sorrows, unknown?"
And He gently said, "My blood I have shed,
To purchase her for my own.
To conquer the grave, and her soul to save,
I trod the wine-press alone.

"I will give her my cross of suffering,
My cup of sorrow to share;
But with endless love, in my home above,
All shall be righted there:
She shall walk in white, in a robe of light,
And a radiant crown shall wear."

"Thou hast heard the terms, fair lady,
That each hath offered for thee.
Which wilt thou choose, and which wilt thou
lose,
This life or the life to be?
The fable was mine, but the choice is yet thine,
Sweet lady! which of the three?

Nearer the stand of the preacher,
The gilded chariot stole:
And each head was bowed, as over the crowd
The thundering accents roll;
And every word, as the lady heard,
Burned in her very soul.

"Pardon, good people," she whispered,
As she rose from her cushioned seat.
Full well, they say, as the crowd made way
You could hear her pulses beat;
And each head was bare as the lady fair
Kneelt at the preacher's feet.

She took from her head the jewels,
The coronet from her brow:
"Lord Jesus," she said, as she bowed her head,
"The highest bidder art Thou;
Thou gav'st for my sake Thy life, and I take
Thy offer—and take it now.

"I know the World and her pleasures,
At best they but wear and cloy;
And the Tempter is bold, but his honours and
gold.
Prove ever a fatal decay.
I long for Thy rest—Thy bid is the best;
Lord, I accept it with joy!