

The Church and the World.

The Church and the World walked far apart
 On the changing shore of time,
 The World was singing a giddy song
 And the Church a hymn sublime.
 "Come, give me your hand," cried the merry World,
 "And walk with me this way."
 But the Church withheld her snowy hands
 And solemnly answered, "Nay,
 I will not give you my hand at all,
 And I will not walk with you;
 Your way is the way to endless death,
 Your words are all untrue."
 "Nay, walk with me but a little space,"
 Said the world, with a kindly air.
 "The road I walk is a pleasant road,
 And the sun shines always there.
 Your path is thorny, and rough, and rude,
 And mine is broad and plain;
 My road is paved with flowers and dew,
 And yours with tears and pain.
 The sky above me is always blue,
 No want, no toil, I know;
 The sky above you is always dark,
 Your lot is a lot of woe.
 My path, you see, is a broad, fair one,
 And my gate is high and wide;
 There's room enough for you and me
 To travel side by side."
 Half shyly the Church approached the World
 And gave him her hand of snow,
 The old World grasped it and walked along,
 Saying, in accents low:
 "Your dress is too simple to please my taste,
 I will give you pearls to wear,
 Rich velvets and silks for your graceful form,
 And diamonds to deck your hair."
 The Church looked down at her plain white robes,
 And then at the dazzling World,
 And blushed as she saw his handsome lip
 With a smile contemptuous curled.
 "I will change my dress for a costlier one,"
 Said the Church, with a smile of grace.
 Then her pure white garments drifted away,
 And the World gave in their place
 Beautiful satins and shining silks,
 And roses and gems and pearls,
 And over her forehead, bright hair fell
 Crisped in a thousand curls.
 "Your house is too plain," said the proud old World,
 "I'll build you one like mine,
 Carpets of Brussels and curtains of lace,
 And furniture ever so fine."
 So he builds her a costly and beautiful house,
 Splendid it was to behold;
 Her sons and her beautiful daughters
 dwelt there,
 Gleaming in purple and gold,
 And fairs and shows in her halls were held,
 And the World and his children were there,
 And laughter and music and feasts were heard
 In the place that was meant for prayer.
 She had cushioned pews for the rich and great
 To sit in their pomp and pride,
 While the poor folks, clad in their shabby suits,
 Sat meekly down outside.

The angel of mercy flew over the Church
 And whispered, "I know thy sin."
 Then the Church looked back with a sigh,
 and longed
 To gather her children in.
 But some were away to the midnight ball,
 And some were off to the play,
 And some were drinking at gay saloons,
 So she quickly went her way.
 Then the sly world gallantly said to her,
 "Your children mean no harm,
 Merely indulging in innocent sports;"
 So she leant on his proffered arm,
 And smiled and chatted and gathered flowers,
 As she walked along with the World.
 "Your preachers are all too old and plain,"
 Said the gay world with a sneer:
 "I will send you some of another stamp,
 Brilliant and gay and fast,
 Who will tell them that people may live as they list,
 And go to heaven at last.
 The Father is merciful, great and good,
 Tender, and true, and kind;
 Do you think He would take one child to heaven
 And leave the rest behind?"
 So he filled her house with gay divines,
 Gifted and great and learned,
 And the plain old men who preached the Cross
 Were out of the pulpits turned.
 "You give too much to the poor," said the World,
 "Far more than you ought to do;
 If the poor need shelter and food and clothes,
 Why need it trouble you?
 Go, take your money and buy rich robes,
 And horses and carriages fine,
 And pearls and jewels and dainty food,
 And the rarest and costliest wine
 My children they dote on all such things,
 And if you their love would win,
 You must do as they do, and walk in the ways
 That they are walking in."
 Then the Church held tightly the strings of her purse,
 And gracefully lowered her head,
 And simpered, "I've given too much away;
 I'll do, sir, as you have said."
 So the poor were turned from her door in scorn,
 And she heard not the orphan's cry,
 And she drew her beautiful robes aside
 As the widows went weeping by,
 And the sons of the World and the sons of the Church
 Walked closely hand in hand;
 And only the Master, who knoweth all,
 Could tell the two apart.
 Then the Church sat down at her ease,
 and said,
 "I, a rich and in goods increased:
 I have need of nothing and sought to do,
 But to laugh and dance and feast."
 And the sly World heard her and laughed in his sleeve,
 And mockingly said aside,
 "The Church is fallen, the beautiful Church,
 And her shame is her boast and pride."
 The Angel drew near to the Mercy Seat,
 And whispered in sighs her name,
 And the saints their anthems of rapture hushed,
 And covered their heads with shame,
 And a voice came down from the hush of heaven,
 From Him who sat on the throne:—

"I know thy works, and how thou hast said,
 'I am rich,' and hast not known
 That thou art naked and poor and blind,
 And wretched before My face:
 Therefore, from My presence I cast thee out,
 And blot thy name from its place."

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