

HOMILETIC GARLANDS.

HOPE CONDUCTS THROUGH BRIGHTEST SCENES.

"Through the soft ways of heaven, and air, and sea,
Which open all their pores to thee,
Like a clear river thou dost glide—"

All the world's bravery that delights our eyes,
Is but thy several liveries;
Thou the rich dye on them bestowest;
The nimble pencil paints the landscape as thou goest."

—Cowley.

LIFE'S LAST MOMENT.—Ah! it will, it must come—this final hour of life, when man must front the King of Terrors, and sink beneath his fatal stroke. Gazing wistfully into the already shifting shadows of the future, the bright glamour of another world breaks upon the vision, and a profound sense of its solemn realities flows into the fluttering spirit. The soul, eager to take wing, is in the very act of beating the earth to soar on high. It is an intensely awful moment—the moment of farewell to time—of welcome to eternity! And it is the moment to which we are all inevitably hastening. How will this world appear then?

STRENGTH OF MUTUAL SYMPATHY.—King Henry VII., on hearing of the sudden death of his son, Prince Arthur, at Ludlow Castle, in 1502, said, "Send some one for the Queen, let me bear this grief with her." She did her best to comfort him; and then, retiring to her own room, was overwhelmed with sorrow, and fainted away. It was now his turn to cheer and comfort. On both sides it was, "Let me bear this grief with her," and "Let me bear this grief with him!" And thus, in their retreat at Greenwich, the King and Queen of England mourned in silence for the loss of their first-born son.—*Dillon's Two Queens.*

CHRIST THE ALL-RELIABLE OBJECT OF FAITH.—Faith is the act of cleaving to Christ, but all its value depends on the worth of the Christ to whom you cleave. A man may have faith—real, ardent, energetic faith—in saints and images, and priests and relics; yet his faith does not save him. A drowning man puts forth his hand and seizes with more than natural energy a bit of froth that dances on the crest of a wave; his hand cleaves it like air, and he sinks helplessly in the deep. He is lost, not for want of precision in his aim, or of energy in his grasp, but for want of truth and power in the phantom to which he fled.—*Roots and Fruits.*

KEEP THE LIGHT BURNING.—In certain religious festivals of the Grecians held in the evening, it was customary for the young men to run races on foot, and sometimes on horseback, holding in their hands torches or lamps, lit at the sacrificial altar of the goddess in whose honour the festival was held; and only the youth who came out of the contest with his light unextinguished was esteemed the victor, and was greeted with the loud plaudits of the multitude. So the Christian carries with him through this world the light of Grace Divine, kindled at the altar of Jesus' sacrifice: and he who keeps it brightly burning to the end of life's great conflict shall be welcomed, like a conqueror, with the thundering applause of the heavenly host.

RELIGION TRIUMPHING OVER PHILOSOPHY.—Odo, the founder of a famous dialectic school at Tournay, in the 11th century, engaged one day in reading and expounding to his pupils a work by Augustine he had not seen before, came to a passage which treated of the wretched condition of the soul absorbed in the pursuits of a worldly life, and excluded from the heavenly glory. This he felt bound to apply to himself, and to the companions of his labours, because their philosophy did not reach beyond the present world. The vanity of the intellectual pursuits in which he had hitherto been engaged rose clearly before his mind. He left his chair, and bursting into tears, took his way to the church, and thenceforth gave himself up to the Lord and His service.—*Næander.*

DYING UTTERANCES OF THE LATE DR. GUTHRIE.—"Thank God, my tongue has been unloosed." "Death is mining away here, slowly but surely, in the dark." "Blessed Jesus, what would I now do, but for Thee?" "I am a father and know what a father's heart is; but my love to my children is no more to God's infinite love as a Father, than one drop of water to that boundless ocean out there"—pointing to the neighbouring sea.

DYING.—"Dying is not the same as going to sleep. For as we sink into slumber, there is a pleasing confusion of the scenes which brings before the fading memory a strange commixture of times, persons, things, and places, till we are lost in the deep unconsciousness of repose. Awakened for an instant, just as we are dropping off, we are made aware of a singular intermixture of thoughts blending together past and recent affairs, in a not unpleasant, though in a most grotesque, fantastic grouping. The memory, chiefly at fault, is rendered, as it were, fragmental, hazy, and blind; while the imagination, let loose, runs riot against the better understanding, and sports its fancies in numerous irrational combinations of thoughts, ideas, and living pictures of the soul. Not so in the hour of death. They who die with their heads sound and undisturbed by the workings of a mortal agony, are wonderfully luminous and collected to the last. Perhaps they are never more alive than when they are dying. Death lights up the soul with supernatural splendour, and lends a torch that illumines the reason with a clear diffusive flame that goes not out as the shadows of the grave close over its burning, vivid, lambent fire. It is not sleep—nay, by the road, death is not sleep, but only the departure of that living thing the soul, as it wings its ways from off the earth across the darksome, dread, profound, unknown."—*Dr. Forbes Winslow's "Journal of Psychological Medicine."*

SIN AN EXCESSIVE INDULGENCE. Its habits are extravagant, and frequently money is necessary to deliver from their penalty. Look at that home, comfortless and drear, its young mistress with anxious countenance and hectic flush, stands before you, trying to hide her renegade tears in the caresses of her little one—that is the fare the drunkard pays. The young man of pious home gets a situation, his commercial prospects widen; sinful companions gather about his path, they lead him to the card-table, till the fiend that smiled upon his innocence to endanger, now tramples upon it to destroy. Debts are acquired, and to free himself from their constant terror he steals; detection ensues, and a ruined character is the fare he pays. Another young man finding himself in a large city for commercial toil, rushes at once into its gaiety; his nights are spent in profligate revels; soon his cheeks pale; weakness seizes him; and a broken constitution is the fare he pays. The cries of the poor, the tears of the sorrowful, the agonies of the dying, with one hollow voice announce the terrible expensiveness of sin.—*Practical Readings in the Book of Jonah.*

EFFORTS TO REFORM, WITHOUT DIVINE ASSISTANCE, ARE USELESS LABOUR.—Such toilers are like Sisyphus, who, on account of his treachery to gods and men, was condemned to roll a heavy stone up a steep mountain, and which, the moment it touched the summit, always rebounded to the plain. The labour was perpetually repeated, with the same result.

DISINTERESTED BENEVOLENCE.—Bishop Otto, who was successful in planting the Gospel in Poland in the early part of the twelfth century, was distinguished for his zeal in promoting the religious instruction of the people in their own spoken language, and for his gift of clear, intelligible preaching. He was accustomed to moderate, with the severity of a monk, his bodily wants. He loved to take from himself to give to the poor, and all the presents he received from prince and noblemen, far and near, he devoted to the same object. Once, during Lent, when fish was very dear, a large one of great price was placed on the table before him. Turning to his steward, he said, "God forbid that I, the poor unworthy Otto, should alone swallow to day such a sum of money. Take this costly fish to my Christ, who should be dearer to me than I am to myself. Take it away to him, wherever thou canst find one lying on the sick bed. For me, a healthy man, my bread is enough." A valuable fur was once sent him as a present, with a request that he would wear it in remembrance of the giver. "Yes," said he, alluding to the well-known words of our Lord, "I will preserve the precious gift so carefully that neither moths shall corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal it." So saying, he gave the fur to a poor lame man, then suffering under various other troubles.—*Næander.*

THE JORDAN A TYPE OF HUMAN LIFE.—The river Jordan becomes narrower and deeper the nearer it approaches the Dead Sea, carrying a heavier load of water till it falls and vanishes in the suffocating depths of the dark sluggish lake. So life narrows as it reaches its close, until, sinking with its ever increasing volume of responsibility and care into the Sea of Death, it becomes lost to sight.