

The Hem of the Garment.

BY CARL SPENCER.

He walks in the earth and the heaven,
The Lord in his moment light;
His robe is crimson of even,
It is gold in the morning light,
And it trails on the dusky mountains
With a silver fringe at night.

High over the people thronging
Is the light of his pure, calm face;
Can the uttermost of our longing
Come fronting that awful place?
But to touch the beautiful garment
Is a comfort and a grace.

The tender sweep of the grasses
Is smoothing away the smart;
And the light, soft wind that passes
Is a balm to the very heart.
Only the hem of his garment—
But I kiss it for my part.

The seamless blue and the border,
Where the earth and the heavens meet
And the colours in mystic order
In the 'broideries round his feet:
It is but the hem of his garment,
But virtue is there complete!

He turns and I am not hidden,
And he smiles, and blesses low;
Did the gift come all unbidden?
Oh, to think that he would know,
Through even the hem of his garment,
It was Faith that touched him so!

Wicked Bill's Pledge.

BY MRS. GEORGE ARCHBALD.

ALL the children in town were afraid of "Wicked Bill." The more timid ran down side streets or into the nearest yards when they saw him coming, and though the bolder jeered him from afar, they also took to their heels if he turned to look toward them, as sometimes happened. He was an old man when I first saw him, who slept in jail as often as at home, and had served at least two sentences in State prison. He had "never been any body." Uncle Levi Green said "he came of a hard nation." His father had been a thief, and his mother of no account. All his brothers were like him except that their careers had been shorter, because they lacked his years, and his only sister was well known at the police station.

A weak constitution would have succumbed in middle life, with "Wicked Bill" to abuse it. But when he was an old man his natural force seemed not much abated. His big and bony frame, sinewy arms, and strong hands make him a terror when he was quarrelsome from a strong drink.

Had he died no one would have regretted him. Yet he lived, spite of utter defiance of all laws of health and life.

Aunt Betty Green declared "if there had been any good in him he'd a' died long ago." Aunt Betty and Uncle Levi had suffered in garden and hen-roost from the depredations of the "hard nation" and had been clear out of patience for many years.

When Francis Murphy made his first tour for temperance work through our part of the country, Newton greeted him night after night with great audiences, hundreds of whom signed the pledge. Those who had once signed it enthusiastically signed it again, as an example; temperate folks who never needed a pledge with which to fight temptation, signed it with an expression of sympathy; men who boasted that they could "drink or leave it alone" signed it, to show they meant henceforth to do the latter; and many men on the brink, but not over, for whom the women dear to them had offered many prayers when none could see, went forward with white faces, and wrote their names with trem-

bling hands; while, at the last struggle for liberty, poor wretches whose staggering gait was familiar to the citizens joined the ardent band.

On the night of the last meeting there was scarcely standing room. The lower seats of the large opera house were all taken, and gallery was packed. When the meeting was about half through, a door opened with a slow, disturbing creak, and in walked "Wicked Bill." There was a titter of merriment among those nearest the door; so little pity do we have at sight of the image of God marred by sin.

But it soon grew quiet again. For even the unthinking were subdued by the eloquence of truth from the lips of a great and earnest speaker.

That was a thrilling plea! I shall never forget it. Many men wept! As for the women—women are easily foolish—they had wept long before men thought of tears. At last, after a fervent appeal to his listeners to come and be saved, the speaker sat down. Pledges were then offered and signers began to press forward. "Wicked Bill" stood with his tall form against the wall and his hands clinched tightly. His lips were compressed and his eyes glittered under his iron-gray eye-brows. Some thoughtless fellow noticed him and said, intending to be acute, "Come, Bill, better step up and sign!"

Bill turned slowly toward the scorner:

"I reckon I better," he said deliberately. And then all the spectators were electrified at sight of his shaggy, white head moving down the aisle, among those bound for the front. Opinions were various as to the propriety of allowing it. One declared it was sacrilegious for a man who had served the devil for nearly seventy years to expect decent people to countenance him now. Many thought he would change his mind and turn back. One man "guessed he was crazy drunk."

But there sat a woman near the aisle who had faith in God's love for miserable sinners. When she saw Bill stopped near the front by those ahead who waited their turn, she rose, and, laying her hand on his arm, said earnestly to those near him:

"In the name of the dear Lord, let this man pass."

Bill trembled a little. "Thankee, mum," he said humbly, "I'm a gittin' there."

At this plenty of hands began to push him ahead, and when he mounted to the platform a hearty cheer greeted him. Some one quickly handed him a pen. He looked at it awkwardly. He could swing an axe or a sledge with the best, but that little pen—

"Ain't they no other way of doin' it?" he asked huskily.

A young man standing near said kindly:

"Can't you write, Bill?"

"Well, you see," said Bill, with a hesitating manner, "I ain't made no letters in so long, it seems as if I do kinder forgit how some of 'em go."

"Let me write it for you," offered the young man, "and you make your mark. Lots of men do that."

"I s'pose it'd do," said Bill, "but wouldn't it be more bindin'er if I done it myself?"

"I think so," put in another bystander; "try it Don't be afraid. Bill King isn't a long name."

Bill mustered up courage, dipped the pen in the ink, and stooping over the little card, wrote a clumsy "W."

The young man looking over his shoulder said:

"What's 'W.' for, Bill?"

Bill laboured on as he answered, "It's for William if I haint forgot how to spell it."

Presently he straightened up with a sigh of relief, holding the card carefully between a great thumb and finger, eyeing it critically and with some pride. Then a lady tied a blue ribbon in the ragged button-hole, for which there was no other use since the button that matched it was gone, and scores of

friends crowded up to shake hands with him. All spoke encouraging words though few believed he would hold out a week. And thus Bill was crowned in the temperance army.

By and by the hall was emptied and he went through the dark to his wretched home to begin a new life. A doubtful beginning for an old man whose birth, life, appetites, and old cronies were all against him! A poor outlook! Yet God and his promise made Bill stronger morally than all his enemies. From the night of his pledge until the night of his death he never drank a drop. Men who thought themselves better than he outlived the good impulses of that hour when they, too, had made a solemn vow. Christians forgot in the hurry of business and individual interests the struggling soul who had so much to fight. Weak and foolish minds sought such diversion as was fitted to them by calling out to him, "Have a drink, Bill?" To these he would reply with a reproachful, pathetic smile, "I don't drink now, boys;" and laying his hand against his blue ribbon he would go meekly by. Everybody wondered about him for months. But by and by some new wonder took his place, and he passed out of the sight and memory of the majority.

Only God and Bill knew the battle his life became. Having given over sweeping out bar rooms and doing chores around the saloons, he often found it hard work to earn his bread. Such old hands for years unaccustomed to regular work, could do but little. But he did what he could find to do, and with the help some kind hearts rendered him, now and then, he lived and walked uprightly. He never complained. The whole man seemed miraculously changed. And every Sunday, clean shaven and clean shirtd, with his hair combed as much as it would submit to, he was found in his place at the "Gospel meetings" held by some mission workers of the city. Here he was a devout listener to proclaiming, exhortation and testimony. It is recorded that once he said "Amen" at the end of a particularly fervent prayer offered by a good brother.

One morning a conspicuous call was made in a city paper for Bill's relief. He had been very sick, of pneumonia, and was destitute. The paragrapher spoke warmly in his behalf, calling attention to his latter blameless days, and responses were immediate and full. Bill had plenty of nice company, too. People often only need reminding. But it was plain that he would soon be beyond wanting donations of cheer, for his days were nearly ended. He knew his condition. Once he would have met death with wicked defiance; now he met it like a Christian.

"I aint sorry," he said. "I've tried to be decent as long's 'twas convenient for the Lord to spare me. But if he's ready to let me off from fightin's soon as this, why, I aint sorry. He knows I done's well's I could, considerin'."

His gratitude was touching.

"I thank 'm all," said he. "A good many nice folks haint seemed to despise me a mite since I got more respectable. I've took notice, and I thank 'em all."

Also he felt great satisfaction at thought of leaving a good name.

"They can't put it in the papers I died o' drinkin', can they? I kep' my promise. I haint touched a bit for seven years. You put that in the papers, will you? And when you see any of 'the boys' you just tell 'em I said, quit drinkin'."

So Bill died. And they wrote him brave obituaries; and they buried him where grave-room is set apart for the poor. He was rough of exterior and unlearned. He had no calling toward culture, his life was of the lowliest.

But among those who have kept the faith, and won the "Well done" of the Father, I am persuaded that his soul has found an exceeding great reward.