

THE THEATRE.

We have always had two lines of arguments about the stage—one, that it is in itself not only harmless, but capable of the highest moral use; the other, that in practice it is the gate of hell. And many an endeavor has been made to redeem it from its blemishes, and to realize its high ideal. Disgusted with the coarse pabulum supplied by the stage in their day, Goethe and Schiller made a strenuous effort to raise it intellectually, by bringing forward plays that were to become standards and models of dramatic literature; the result was a miserable failure.

Henry Irving, like many others, has renewed the attempt, inspired by a high conception of the possibility of noble service through dramatic art; but how little such men have succeeded in elevating the moral tone of the stage is painfully apparent from the recent confessions of actors like Mrs. Kendal, at the Social Science Congress, or of dramatic writers and managers like those who have been recently giving their experience in *The Fortnightly Review* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

We know as a fact that many have abandoned the stage as an incompatible employment, when they have become earnest Christians; that some who have remained on it have sternly refused to let their children follow their example; and that even humble performers of insignificant parts have told those who have sought their Christian good that they could not continue to read their Bibles because Christianity and the stage could not be combined. Critics may deal as they please with the theoretical question, but meanwhile the practical must carry the day. Between the actual stage and the spirit of Christ there is no fellowship.—*Scl.*

THE DYING MINISTER.

Burdened, with the weight of years and labors, the old preacher lay upon his couch, waiting the summons of the messenger to call him across the river. Around him were gathered his children and brethren, ministering, as far as they could, to his every want. He lay silent for a time, when one of the watchers said, "He is going soon." Tears were flowing freely from many eyes. He roused a little, murmuring something that none could understand. "His mind wanders in the last

hour," said one. "He seems to revive a little." "Raise my head," he said. "Is it time for the sermon? The lights are burning, and the song seems to have died away." All voices were hushed as he continued:

"Well, my text is from Jesus: 'In my Father's house are many mansions'—blessed words of promise. You poor, lowly ones who dwell in cabins, remember it is a mansion awaits you; and you poor waiting ones, remember there are many of them. I promised my children to come home, but that mansion is my home. I'm too weary to preach long to-night, brethren."

"What is that I hear? The music should not begin before the sermon is over—strange voices, too—no, not strange; 'tis the wife of my early youth leading the choir—yes, and mother, too. I can't preach; let me lie down and rest." He opened his eyes. In them was a far away look, but what he saw none of the watchers could tell. Raising his hand solemnly, he said: "Let us pronounce the benediction. May grace, mercy and peace abide—." An unintelligible murmur, and the hush of silence came, to be broken by the sighing and sobbing of watchers. The old preacher had preached his last sermon.—*Christian Advocate.*

ALONE WITH GOD.

In every instance the man who prevails in prayer is the man who is alone as he prays with God. Abraham leaves Sarah behind when he pleads with him for Sodom; and if he fails it is because he ceases to ask before God ceases to grant. Moses is by himself beside the bush in the wilderness. Joshua is alone when Christ comes to him an armed man. Gideon and Jephthah are by themselves when commissioned to save Israel. Once does Elijah raise a child from the dead, and Elisha does the same, and in each case not even the mothers come in while the prophet, alone with God, asks and receives.

Although others are present, Saul journeying to Damascus is alone with Christ after light breaks upon him. Cornelius is praying by himself when the angel flashes upon his solitude, nor is any one with Peter upon the housetop when he is prepared to go to the Gentiles for the first time. One John is alone in the wilderness, another John is alone in