

a gentleman, who was more than twice her own age, but this engagement being broken on his part, she resolved to spend her days without any similar entanglement, and this resolution she kept till the day of her death. It was about this time that she was introduced to fashionable life, and here she was subjected to influences which, but for divine grace, must have subverted her footsteps from the way of life. She became a frequenter of the theatre, of balls and parties of pleasure. She had become an authoress, and this character, as well as her wit in conversation, served to introduce her among the highest circles. She was a visitor at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds, where she met Dr. Johnson, Garrick, and other literary men, who then figured in the eye of the public. Her sister, speaking of Hannah on one of these visits, says:—

“Tuesday evening we drank tea at Sir Joshua’s with Dr. Johnson. Hannah is certainly a great favorite.—She was placed next him, and they had the entire conversation to themselves. They were both in remarkably high spirits: it was certainly her lucky night. I never heard so many good things. The old genius was certainly jocular, and the young one very pleasant.—You would have imagined we had been at some comedy had you heard our peals of laughter.”

At Garrick’s house she was a frequent visitor. Speaking of one of these visits she says:—

“We have been passing three days at the temple of taste, nature, Shakspeare and Garrick; where every thing that could please the ear, charm the eye, and gratify the understanding passed in quick succession.—From dinner to midnight he entertained us in a manner infinitely agreeable. He read to us all the whimsical correspondence in prose and verse which, for many years, he had carried on with the first geniuses of the age.”

It may be truly said that the lives of the rich are spent under a mask. They walk in a vain show. Before the eye of their inferiors every thing is done to excite their wonder and admiration. Their garments, their pomp, their equipage, are all fitted to impress on those around them that they belong to a higher order of beings than working people. And yet, when we follow them to their homes, and observe how they are occupied, we shall be convinced of the hollowness of worldly greatness, and be ready to say with the Psalmist, “Surely thou hast set them on slippery places.” They are wearied in seeking devices to waste their precious hours; and things which would be despicable from poor men are esteemed honorable when they emanate from the rich.—Speaking of head-dresses worn by the grandees of London, our authoress makes the following witty observations:—

“I am annoyed by the foolish absurdity of the present mode of dress. Some ladies carry on their heads a large quantity of fruit, and yet they would despise a poor useful member of society who carried it there for the purpose of selling it for bread.”

Mrs. More was thirty-one years of age when she wrote the tale of Sir Eldred. At this time

poets and authors, generally, were held in high esteem, and productions which now would scarcely be read, were then commented on and lauded to the sky. The following passage has a reference to the tale referred to:—

“I will tell you,” she says, writing to her sisters, “the most ridiculous circumstance in the world. After dinner Garrick took up the Monthly Review, (civil gentlemen, by the bye, these Reviewers), and read Sir Eldred with all his pathos and all his graces. I think I never was so ashamed in my life, but he read it so superlatively, that I cried like a child. Only think, to cry at the reading of one’s own poetry. I could have beaten myself, for it looked as if I thought it very moving, which I can truly say was far from being the case. But the beauty of the jest lies in this: Mrs. Garrick twinkled as well as I, and made as many apologies for crying at her husband’s reading as I did for crying at my own verses. She got out of the scrape by pretending she was touched at the story, and I by saying the same thing of the reading. It furnished us with a great laugh at the catastrophe, when it would really have been decent to have been a little sorrowful.”

Fashionable life has a dark side as well as a bright one, and if there are in it numerous temptations to seduce the young and the inexperienced, it has its tribulations, which hold forth warnings to all men to mix trembling with their mirth.—The following particulars, noted in one of Mrs. More’s letters, will illustrate the truth of what we have said:—

“A relation of the Duchess of Chandos died at the Duchess’s a few days ago, at the card table: she was dressed most sumptuously; they stripped off her diamonds, stuck her upright in a coach, put in two gentlemen with her, and sent her home two hours after she was dead; at least so the story goes. Baron Burland died as suddenly. After having been in the House of Lords, he dined heartily, and was standing by the fire talking politics to a gentleman. So you see, even London has its warnings, if we would but listen to them. These are two signal ones in one week.”

In another letter, about the same time, she says:—

“Mrs. Boscawen came to see me the other day, with the Duchess, in her gilt chariot, with four footmen, (as I hear), for I happened not to be at home. It is not possible for any thing on earth to be more agreeable to my taste than my present manner of living. I am so much at my ease; have a great many hours at my own disposal; read my own books, and see my own friends; and whenever I please, may join the most polished and delightful society in the world. Our breakfasts are little literary societies. There is generally company at meals, as they think it saves time, by avoiding the necessity of seeing people at other seasons. Mr. Garrick sets the highest value upon his time of any body I ever knew. From dinner to tea we laugh, chat, and talk nonsense; the rest of the time is generally devoted to study. I detest and avoid public places more than ever, and should make a miserably bad fine lady. What most people come to London for, would keep me from it.”

Though Mrs. More had gone far in identifying herself with the follies and sins of fashionable life, we still find, from diverse incidental reflections, that she still retained a religious profession. She possessed a reverence for the Holy Scriptures, and her Sabbath exercises were not laid aside.—