

BYRON AND MARTYN.

Religion as a means of present happiness contrasted with the indulgence of a worldly spirit.

The following thoughts on two strongly marked characters, are from Miss Catherine Beecher's new work, intitled "Letters on the Difficulties of Religion."

Reasoning from the known laws of mind, we gain the position, that obedience to the Divine Law is the surest mode of securing every species of happiness attainable in this state of existence.

To exhibit this, some specific cases will be selected, and perhaps a fairer illustration cannot be presented than the contrasted records of two youthful personages who have made the most distinguished figure in the Christian, and in the literary world; Byron and Martyn—Henry Martyn the Missionary, and Lord Byron the Poet.

The first was richly endowed with ardent feelings, keen susceptibilities, and superior intellect. He was the object of many affections, and in the principal university of Great Britain won the highest honours, both in classic literature, and mathematical science. He was flattered, caressed, and admired; the road of fame and honour lay open before him, and the brightest hopes of youth seemed ready to be realized. But the hour came when he looked upon a lost and guilty world, in the light of eternity: when he realized the full meaning of the sacrifice of our incarnate God, when he assumed his obligations to become a fellow-worker in redeeming a guilty world from the dominion of selfishness and all its future woes. "The love of God constrained him;" and without a murmur, for wretched beings on a distant shore, whom he never saw, of whom he knew nothing but that they were miserable and guilty, he relinquished the wreath of fame, forsook the path of worldly honour, severed the ties of kindred, and gave up friends, country and home. With every nerve throbbing in anguish at the sacrifice, he went forth alone, to degraded heathen society, to solitude and privation, to weariness and painfulness, and to all the trials of a missionary life.

He spent his days in teaching the guilty and degraded, the way of pardon and peace. He lived to write the law of his God in the wide-spread characters of the Persian nation, and to place a copy in the hands of its king. He lived to contend with the chief Mollahs of Mahomet, in the mosques of Shiraz, and to kindle a flame in Persia more undying than its fabled fires. He lived to endure rebuke and scorn, to toil and suffer in a fervid climate, to drag his weary steps over burning sands, with the daily dying hope, that at last he might be laid to rest among his kindred and on his native shore. Yet even this last earthly hope was not attained, for after spending all his youth in ceaseless labours for the good of others, at the early age of thirty-two he was laid in an unknown and foreign grave.

He died alone—a stranger in a strange land—with no friendly form around to sympathize and soothe.—"*Compositus est paucioribus lacrymis.*" Yet this was the last record of his dying hand: "I sat in the orchard and thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God! in solitude my company! my friend! my comforter!"

And in viewing the record of his short yet blessed life, even if we forget the exulting joy with which such a benevolent spirit must welcome to heaven the thousands he toiled to redeem; if we look only at his years of self-denying trial, where were accumulated all the sufferings he was ever to feel, we can find more evidence of true happiness than is to be found in the records of the youthful poet; who was gifted with every susceptibility of happiness, who spent his days in search of selfish enjoyment, who had every source of earthly bliss laid open and drank to the very dregs.

His remains present one of the most mournful exhibitions of a noble mind in all the wide chaos of ruin and disorder. He also was naturally endowed with overflowing affections, keen sensibilities, quick conceptions, and a sense of moral rectitude. He had all the constituents of a mind of first rate order. But he passed through existence amid the wildest disorder of a ruined spirit. His mind seemed utterly unbalanced, teeming with rich thoughts and overbearing impulses, the sport of the strangest fancies, and the wrongest passions; bound down by no habit, restrain-

ed by no principle; a singular combination of great conceptions and fantastic caprices, of manly dignity and childish folly, of noble feeling and babyish weakness.

The Lord of Newstead Abbey—the heir of a boasted line of ancestry—a peer of the realm—the pride of the social circle—the leading star of poesy—the hero of Greece—the wonder of the gaping world, can now be followed to his secret haunts. And there the veriest child of the nursery might be amused at some of his silly weakness and ridiculous conceits. Dressed about the cut of a collar, fuming at the colour of his dress, intensely anxious about the whiteness of his hand, deeply engrossed with monkeys and dogs, and flying about from one whim to another, with a reckless earnestness as ludicrous as it is disgusting.

At times this boasted hero and genius seemed nought but an overgrown child, that had broken its leading-strings and overmastered its nurse. At all other times he is beheld in all the rounds of dissipation and the haunts of vice, occasionally filling up his leisure in recording and disseminating the disgusting minutæ of his weakness and shame, and with an effrontery and stupidity equalled only by that of a friend who pretends them to an insulted world. Again we behold him philosophising like a sage, and moralizing like a Christian, while often from his bosom bursts forth the repinings of a wounded spirit. He sometimes seemed to gaze upon his own mind with wonder, to watch its disordered powers with curious inquiry; to touch its complaining strings, and start at the response; while often with maddening sweep he shook every chord, and sent forth his deep wailings to entrance a wandering world.

Both Henry Martyn and Lord Byron shared the sorrows of life, and their records teach the different workings of the Christian and worldly mind. Byron lost his mother, and when urged not to give way to sorrow, he burst into an agony of grief, saying "I had but one friend in the world, and now she is gone!" On the death of some of his early friends, he thus writes:—"My friends fall around me, and I shall be left a lonely tree before I am withered. I have no resource but my own reflections, and they present no prospect here or hereafter, except the selfish satisfaction of surviving my betters. I am indeed most wretched."

And thus Henry Martyn mourns the loss of one most dear. "Can it be that she has been lying so many months in the cold grave! Would that I could always remember it or always forget it; but to think a moment on other things, and then feel the remembrance of it come, as if for the first time, rends my heart asunder. O my gracious God, what should I do without Thee! But now thou art manifesting thyself as 'the God of all consolation.' Never was I so near Thee. There is nothing in this world for which I could wish to live, except because it may please God to appoint me some work to do. O thou incomprehensibly glorious Saviour, what hast thou done to alleviate the sorrows of life!"

It is recorded of Byron, that in society he generally appeared humourish and prankish; yet when railed on his melancholy turn of writing, his constant answer was, that though thus merry and full of laughter, he was at heart one of the most miserable wretches in existence. And thus he writes:

"Why, at the very height of desire and human happiness, worldly, ambitious, ambitious, or even avaricious, does there mingle a certain sense of doubt and sorrow—a fear of what is to come—a doubt of what is! If it were not for hope what would the future be?—a hell! As for the past, what predominates in memory?—hopes baffled! From whatever place we commence we know where it must all end. And yet what good is there in knowing it? It does not make men wiser or better. If I were to live my life over again, I do not know what I would change in my life, unless it were for—not to have lived at all. All history, and experience, and the rest teach us, that good and evil are pretty equally balanced in this existence and that what is most to be desired is an easy passage out of it. What can it give us but years, and those have little of good but their ending."

And thus Martyn writes: "I am happier here in this remote land, where I seldom hear what happens in the world, than I was in England, where there are so many calls to look at things that are seen. The

precious Word is now my only study, by means of translations. Time flows on with great rapidity. It seems as if life would all be gone before any thing is done. I sometimes rejoice that I am but twenty-seven, and that unless God should ordain it otherwise, I may double this number in constant and successful labour, before passing it to the other world."

And thus they make their records at anniversaries, when the mind is called to review life and its labours. Thus Byron writes: "At twelve o'clock I shall have completed thirty-three years! I go to my bed with a heaviness of heart at having lived so long and to so little purpose. It is now three minutes past twelve, and I am thirty-three.

Eheu fugaces, Posthume, Posthume,
Labuntur anni;

But I do not regret them so much for what I have done as for what I might have done."

And thus Martyn: "I like to find myself employed usefully in a way I did not expect or foresee. The coming year is to be a perilous one, but my life is of little consequence, whether I finish the Persian New-Testament or not. I look back with pity on myself, when I attached so much importance to my life and labours. The more I see of my own works, the more I am ashamed of them, for carelessness and clumsiness mar all the works of a man. I am sick when I look at the wisdom of man, but am relieved by reflecting, that we have a city whose builder and maker is God. The least of his works is refreshing. A dried leaf or a straw, makes me feel in good company, and complacency and admiration take the place of disgust.—What a momentary duration is the life of man! "*Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum,*" may be affirmed of the river; but men pass away as soon as they begin to exist. Well, the moments pass!"

They waft us sooner o'er
This life's tempestuous sea:
Soon we shall reach the blissful shore
Of blest eternity.

Such was the experience of those who in youth completed their course. The poet has well described his own career:

"A wandering mass of shapeless flame,
A pathless comet and a curse,
The menace of the universe;
Still rolling on with innate force,
Without a sphere, without a course,
A bright deformity on high,
The monster of the upper sky.

In holy writ we read of those who are "raging waves of the sea foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." The lips of man may not apply these terrific words to any whose doom is yet to be disclosed, but there is a passage which none can fear to apply.—"Those that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as stars for ever and ever!"

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"CHURCHES—PREACHERS—SMART MEN."

Mr. Editor,—I hear much said in the churches about smart men—men of talents, great men, powerful preachers, &c. &c. and this more particularly in reference to candidates for settlement. The question asked by churches in want of pastors, are not, is the candidate a good man? sound in the faith? eminently pious, devoted, and active?—but is he a smart man? a man of talents? a popular preacher? This has become universal, from the aristocratic city congregation with its salary of two or three thousand a year, down to the feeble society with its stipend of two or three hundred. Indeed, the feebler the church, the more unwillingness is often manifested to take up with a sound, pious, faithful minister of ordinary talents. This feeling is doing immense mischief both among the wealthy and feeble congregations; but more especially the latter. I have a few things to say to small churches and feeble congregations on the subject. I am not about to detract an iota from the smart men. Would to God all the Lord's prophets were ten times more gifted, provided they were all a little more pious than smart. But then there are evils connected with having one of our present race of smart men, of which feeble churches little dream. Wealthy congregations can afford to bear these evils perhaps,