

MONICA—A PAGE FOR MOTHERS.

By J. W. C., Author of "*Mary McNeill*," "*Alice Lowther*," &c., &c.

Passing one day along the magnificent picture galleries of the Great International Exhibition, our attention was arrested by a small but very striking picture. It consisted of two figures seated side by side, evidently, from their strong resemblance to each other, mother and son. There was something wondrous about the expression of each, and we felt assured that a tale of no ordinary interest was the history of their lives.

Peace, heaven's own peace, sat on each countenance; yet were there traces of past storms, past agonies, on the pale classic features and colourless cheeks of that mother and son. Hand locked in hand, and a mutual look of repose and love, suggested the thought that the son—a prodigal perhaps—had found in the forgiving heart of that sweet angel-like mother, the rest which he had vainly sought in the cold, wide world.

We turned to our catalogue for information regarding this interesting pair. "Monica and Augustine," was the brief answer to our eager inquiry. It was enough. Oh, what a flood of light was let in upon the scene! What memories were stirred up by these sainted names.

Reader, will you, in imagination, sit down by us opposite this picture-gem, and we shall tell you some passages in the life of this Christian mother, and the son of her love?

Monica—around whose form that light drapery falls, and whose colourless cheeks offer no contrast to the white folds which, in Eastern fashion, adorn her head—did not always wear that chastened look. Once she was a bright and buoyant maiden, with a young heart full of ardour, and full of holy and happy desires. Yes, Monica, born in a pagan land, and surrounded with pagan worship became an early Christian, and experienced the joy of having her best days consecrated to him whose service is perfect freedom.

Yet, notwithstanding her blessed choice, and the earnest love of her heart to her Saviour-God, Monica sinned—wilfully sinned—against the light of God's word, in a very momentous step of her life's history. She heeded not the divine command, "Be ye not unequally yoked," nor the awful inference deduced, "What fellowship hath light with darkness?" and, at the age of twenty, she gave her hand to one who clung to a system which had "gods many and lords many."

A train of misery followed! We have stood on the spot where the transparent Rhone and the muddy Arac converge, but refuse to coalesce; and the spectacle suggests the close connection which may exist between two human beings, and the yet intense dissimilarity and estrangement where the hearts and habits are opposed. We search in vain for a more melancholy or affecting proof of this disjunctive conjunction than in the case of Monica, and Patricius her pagan husband. Her domestic sorrows drove her closer to her God. In him she was made strong to endure and patient to hope. Her life's aim, at this period of her history, was to win her husband to her God; and neither prayers nor pains were spared to achieve this great end. Note, dear reader, the union of both. Aware that "the shortest way to win a soul is round by heaven," she forgot not the means laid down in God's word, whereby a godly wife may gain a godless husband. The heavenly counsel was hid deep down in her heart, and welled up into her daily life: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives" (1 Pet. iii. 1). And who that knows anything of such a lot does not recall the daily, hourly struggle involved! For it does not embrace any single, though magnanimous, act of self-denial or disinterested love, but marks out a daily unrelaxed path of meek patience and self-sacrifice. The prize held up is a priceless one—a soul saved! The goal is glory. But the struggle is sore, and the way is often long and painful. Let such as know this from their own sad experience take courage by the bright and noble example of Monica, and pray on, and labor on, knowing that you too *shall* reap in due season, *if ye faint not*.