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Religious Miscellany.

Confessions of Spiritual Sin.

BY THE LATE WM. M. BUNTING.

My Spirit! My Spirit!
Fled with grief for grieving thee;
Present, though I mourn apart,
Listen to a wailing heart.

Sins unnumbered confess,
Of exceeding iniquities,
Sins against Thyself alone,
Only to Omniscience known.

Defiance to Thy whispered calls,
Reckless mind remembered falls;
Transient fears beneath thy rod;
Treachery trifling with thy God!

Tasting that the Lord is good,
Pining then for poisoned food;
At the fountain of the skies
Craving creaturely supplies!

Worldly cares at worship-time,
Greeting aims in words sublime;
Pride when God is passing by;
Sick, while souls in darkness lie!

Useless vows whose breath avoke
In Thy courts no echo broke;
Vain failures, steps astray;
Languors in a once loved way!

Childhood changed, changed desires,
Quenched corruption's ember-fires,
Sins like these my heart deceive,
Thy, its sole Familiar, give!

Oh, how lightly I slept,
With Thy daily wrongs unhept!
Sighing chidings to do,
Shamed the wounded Comforter!

Woke to holy labours freed,
With the plague-spot in my flesh—
Angel seemed to human flesh,
Stood a helper in Thy light!

Still, Thy comforts do not fail,
Thy healing signs avail;
Patient in mine of my breast,
Thou art grieved—yet I am blest!

O merciful to me,
Not in bitterness for Thee!
Father, pardon through Thy Son,
Sins against Thy Spirit done!

The Evils of Dancing.

The evils of dancing in promoting the frivolity of young persons, and the estrangement of their hearts from all that is good and holy, should lead every profane Christian to discontinue the practice by all means. From a series of articles in the *Central Advocate* on the subject; we take the following—

1. From the beginning to the end of dancing there is nothing valuable except the physical exercises, and that can be gained in ways less dangerous. The number and strength of our temptations are dreadfully multiplied when we are led into youthful frivolities, and impure society. Dr. Rice quotes Caroline Fry on this point. Her testimony is—

"Surely if their parents knew how the image of bygone things stay by the imagination, how the heart yearns for the things that were once its dearest, follow us to the very presence of our Maker—disturb our prayers, pollute our offerings, mix their unblended images with our visions of delight, and cross every stream of heavenly consolation—surely they would spare to stain the young memory with one single act of forbidden things. And how is it that they do not know? When I think of these things I am at a loss. I ask myself if it is possible that one believer's heart is so unlike another's that the memory of folly should be so painful and the habit of sin so powerful, and earthly associations so tempting."

We cannot refrain from uttering our solemn convictions that the ideas which underlie nearly all dances are impure, are terribly vicious and misleading to the young heart. All the "poetry of motion" so feelingly described by lovers of the dance, is just such poetry as would not have to be written on pure souls. We warn Christians against its subtle power, which like a spell lures the soul to ruin.

2. We urge the objection that dancing as commonly practiced leads to drink-drinking and drunkenness. We never knew a ball where wine was not used, and generally every kind of liquor is liberally supplied and drunk. Young men who habitually attend balls are as habitually drunk-drinkers, on the high road to a drunkard's den. Such young men are unfit companions for virtuous girls. They would be better dead than married to a common drunkard. Nothing out of eternal perdition is as bad as being a drunkard's wife, unless it be a drunkard.

This all-consuming care has its strongest defences in fashionable society, and in that society its severest retreat is the ball-room. The fact is both ladies and gentlemen drink at balls and both get heated with wine and inflamed by passion. The atmosphere of a ball-room is, and leaves the robbed victim polluted by the image of sin and the breath of the destroyer, intense. Cases have not been unrequited in which young men have chosen their companions among the beautiful waltzers of the ball-room, and afterward found that they were incurable tipplers.

3. Another objection to dancing is that it is a profane act. It is conformity to the spirit of the world, and its concomitant vices are steadily retained. No Christian can go to a ball and dance without having a sense of demerit, a feeling of condemnation and personal unworthiness and shame. "Be ye not conformed to this world." We do not believe that one who loves the love of God dwells in desire to attend balls. We never knew any but worldly, backslidden members of the church to dancing school. Ministers who favor it are more desirous to get the people's money than to save their souls. Churches that permit it have but little moral weight. All this we say in perfect kindness, but without circumlocution, and we would prove more than we have stated. If any such Christians read these strictures they will pray to be enlightened, but will immediately attempt to satisfy their consciences by denouncing us as a bigoted, prejudiced fanatic; all which

we have frequently heard said of other men and so do not greatly fear such arguments.

Once in our pastoral work we met a young man who was proud, suspicious and impudent; and when we courteously addressed him on the subject of religion, he assailed our church in a most unchristian manner. Not long afterward this same young man went to a ball, danced nearly all night, went home sick, and gradually sank into the arms of death. Once he had been a happy, modest Christian, but had been misled, as strange as it may seem, by a minister of the gospel, who told him the Methodist Church was too strict, that dancing was getting, that his church was the true church. While on his dying bed this poor young man refused to let this cruel tempter come into his room. He did not wish to see a man who had betrayed him to death but sent for pious men who had warned him against his vicious course. His dying prayer for pardon, his fearful testimony against the fatal delusions that had misled him and the false minister who had deceived him were affecting in the extreme. Calling to see him in the afternoon we could not get away until the next morning; he begged us to stay and pray for him if his happy God would have mercy on him.

Wracks of Christ's children lie all along this same perilous shore of worldliness and guilt. The ball-room is an ante-chamber of hell where souls dress for initiation into Satan's kingdom. It is impossible to pray for these with hope, as God's care rests on its folly, incontinence and intemperance. We warn our readers against the dance for all the reasons we have given, and we shall continue still to utter them. We discuss the question for the sake of the young members of the church, for whom we feel great interest.

Leaky Christians.

Here is a lesson quietly, but piquantly given, and not without some need thereof. "A man, as it were, a cask of wine. The figure would have been allowable, in the days of Christ, more allowable, perhaps, than in our temperance days. A storm knows the in a stove. It is a small worm, not half so large as a knitting-needle. The moment he comes to the wine he draws out his head—for worms are not as fond of wine as men are—and a drop follows him only a drop. Another worm on the other side of the cask makes its way through another star. He feeds a drop, and draws back. On each end there are a dozen or twenty other worms eating their way to the wine. Not one of them is as big as a mitre; but fifty or sixty of them together, if each makes a hole only large enough to slip a drop to pass through it, are sufficient to cause the waste of all the precious contents of the cask. After the lapse of a day, a week, a month, or six months, the vintner goes to see his cask, and behold, the cask sounds as empty as a hydropic's heart! There is not a drop in it. And yet it looks like a cask of wine. Where have the contents gone? Not one pint has been surreptitiously drawn by the servant that gets blamed, or by the thief that the vintner accuses without knowing who he is. The wine has all leaked out at holes not large enough to admit of the discharge of more than a drop at a time. Now, ten million little menaces, ten million selfishnesses, ten million pettinesses, ten million selfish dispositions, pierce and puncture the heart, and all its graces are drawn out. You are empty because you leak all over."—*Met. Protestant.*

The Praying Wife.

I have just come from the bedside of a man whose name is as thoroughly healthy and happy as his own; and he is a woman's heart who has been the last two months he has given his heart to Jesus, and the change has been marvelous. Beside his bed was, in literal truth, his guardian angel—an energetic, discreet, godly-minded wife. "I am praying for him" has been the resolute answer of that noble woman for several years past, whenever I have talked with her about her husband's stubborn impiteness. His life was becoming endangered by strong drink; but the harder he drank the harder she prayed. At length the answer came, in a slow, wailing sickness that took him away from tempting associates, shut him up with his conscience on a bed of pain, and left him to look at his own life "in the face." Her loving heart bears his sickness submissively, for she recognizes in it the medicinal process by which God is curing his sick-sinners. Brave-hearted, noble wife! her prayers have done more than my preaching for that man's conversion. He is now preaching Christ with a sick-bed for his pulpit.

I never despair of the man who had a good mother, or who has a patient, praying wife. I know well the heavy load of despondency that lies on many a true woman's heart on account of the persistent impiteness of that husband who is the larger half of her own daily existence. To all such, I would say—never give him up. When you sit alone at the communion table—sundered from him "whom your soul loveth"—plead for him with your Saviour. Is a woman's heart only a prayer? Keep his conversion ever before you as perseveringly as Cyrus W. Field kept before his eye the accomplishment of his ocean-telegraph. Not only beseech God for it, but labour for it yourself. Your prayers will be of no avail if you contradict them by an inconsistent repulsive conduct, or a frivolous life. I beg of you—do not ask God to lead your husband to the Cross, and then stand yourself right in his way. No man is likely to be won over by religion by his wife who comes home from the prayer meeting or the communion table, to scold him, to vex him with an ugly temper, to play the slattern, or the scandal-monger, or to neglect her children for the giddy round of evening amusements. We do not believe that God ever answers a prayer that is contradicted by our own conduct.

Live, therefore, for your husband's conversion. Not only pray for him, but draw him. You cannot drive him to the sanctuary, or to the prayer meeting, or to the Saviour. But if, in the name of Jesus, you fasten the silken harness of affection to him, and sweet the persuasions of earnest lips and of a holy, sweet-tempered, consistent life—you may be joyfully surprised to see how he will go with you. As the huge hull of the "Great Republic"—launched the other day—

seems to bid the little steam-boat, "draw me and I will go along with you," so has many a husband's resolute will been won along steadily toward Christ by the gentle persuasions of a sweet, prayerful woman's life.

All the positive efforts you make for your husband's conversion should be made wisely. Practice a holy fast. Go with him, on Sunday, to such Evangelical Church as he prefers; do not force him to go your way. No minister is likely to do him any good, for whom he has a reasonable dislike. Watch your opportunities to reach your husband's heart. Do not approach him with teasing talk or with taunts, do not worry him with even a religious conversation when he is not in the mood to receive it. Watch the movements of his own heart, and the guidings of Providence—and then with fervent prayer work with the Holy Spirit.

One of the most blessed results of every great revival is that it brings together at the Lord's table those who had always been sundered; they who had been wedded for this world become wedded for eternity. In my own Church, last March, forty husbands and wives sat down side by side for the first time at the Sacramental Supper on one Sabbath. Even now as I write, a note lies beside me—just received from an intelligent, strong-willed man, who tells me that he has given himself to Jesus. His wife stood up alone eight months since to confess her Saviour. We can tell whether the echoes of her prayers may not be heard in the lines of her husband's touching and manly letter?

Hold on, Mother.

Such was the exhortation of a sailor to his widowed mother. She had several children, for whom "she prayed, day and night, exceedingly." Manifestly, in answer to her prayers, one after another was awakened by the Spirit of God, convinced of sin, and subdued into saving reconciliation through the medium of Christ crucified. One of her sons followed the sea for eleven years. Much had she prayed for her "poor sailor boy," and many a letter had she written him, rich with maternal counsel and solicitude. When at home, she had taken unwearied pains, such as none but a pious mother would take, to withdraw him from all improper associations, and to interest him in whatsoever things are pure, and true, and lovely.

At length she received letters from him, which breathed a new spirit, and spoke a new language. I listened to the voice of the mother as with "joy unexpressed" she read to me three of those letters, richly expressive of the views and feelings of a new born soul. In them, all she acknowledged his special indebtedness to her faithful warnings and persevering prayers. In one he spoke of the condition and prospects of her children who still remained impitent; and in order to encourage her to do for them as she had done for him, he says, "Hold on, mother; your prayers may yet be answered in our conversion."

Tears Prevailing.

An ungodly youth, who had disregarded the pious advice of parents, at length consented to accompany them to hear a popular minister who visited the town in which they lived. The subject of the discourse was the heavenly state, which was described by the most glowing and attractive representation. One wandering among the young men expressed his admiration of the preacher's talents—"But," said he, turning to his mother, "I was surprised, while the smile of joy was visible on the countenances of all around me, you and my father appeared gloomy and sad, and more than once in tears. I was more astonished, because I thought that, if any could claim an interest in the subject, you were the happy persons." "Ah, my son," replied the anxious mother, "I did weep, not because I feared my own personal interest in the subject, or that of your affectionate and pious father; but I wept for you; it was the fear that you, my beloved child, would be forever banished from the blessedness of heaven, that caused me to give way to my bursting grief." "I supposed," said the father, turning to his wife, that those were your reflections. The same concern for our dear son made me weep also." The pointed and judicious remarks found their way to the heart of the child. He felt them keenly; they wounded his hard heart, led him to repentance, and to the cross of Christ for mercy and reconciliation, and terminated in his conversion to God.

Forgetting the Things that are Behind.

The following, from one of Henry Ward Beecher's Lectures Room talks, reported for the *Methodist*, is admirably adapted to help halting, doubting Christians, to take hold with a firm and confident step upon the path of life. It applies to an experience by no means common among those striving to do right.

A man starts to make his course through the woods to a mountain which he sees in the distance, and he takes a line in that direction. As he goes on, partly from carelessness and partly from a want of knowledge as to the latitude, he drifts from the right path, and wanders round and round, not knowing where he is; and by and by he comes to an opening and an elevation, where he gets another sight of the mountain, and he starts to himself: "Well, I am all wrong. When I started, that mountain bore away, and I am awfully here; and there is no way for me now but to go right back and take like." Why may he not as well take a line where he is, go directly to the mountain from there? "What sort of a road is that?" "That will never do in the world. You are no nearer at all." And the man says—"Then I suppose I must go back and read my A B C's again." He has already learned them, he simply reads poorly, without proper emphasis, without any appreciation of the sense, and without indicating the pauses; and what has he to do but to start where he is, and do the right and best thing?

Suppose a man has been prescribing for himself for some sinner, and suppose finding that he is getting no better, he calls a doctor, and the doctor says: "You have been mistaken about yourself; you have not understood your own symptoms; you have employed improper remedies; you have not hit the difficulty at all; you have aggravated your trouble." He stops to stop just where he was, and take the new course that, under skillful direction, would lead to entire and permanent restoration.

Now, it is precisely so in religious matters. A man that has begun a Christian life, and stopped, or a man that has begun a Christian life, and gone through devout and circuitous ways, he is in quite out of the right path; or a man that has been swept away by worldly influences—such a man, the moment he comes to himself, says, or should say: "There is but one course for me." Right there, where he is, without stopping to think of the past or anything relating to it, he should begin to live a humble, loving, obedient life to the Lord Jesus Christ—standing right in his tracks, he is to begin there, and just as he is, as though he had never had any hope or known anything about religion. Throw away everything that you have ever had of a hope.

I do not mean by this to bring contempt upon old experiences; but your transcendent

duty is to begin instantly, in your place, to fulfil your obligations toward God and man. If you have been a Christian, before, you will find it out; and if you have never been a Christian, it is time that you were one; and in either case the way is not to go back and try to analyze and test old evidences, but to take new steps, with a new hope, and a new love, and a new purpose, for the Saviour.

Therefore I would say that if you have ever lived a religious life, and if you are, in a feeble manner, trying to eke out your old hope, and the past, and seek at once the loving heart of the Saviour. To-night, without a moment's delay, let the dear patience and goodness say: "Let the dead bury their dead; let the past suffer for the past; now, Lord, for the future, for the life, for the eternal life, I will live, with thy help. Begin like a child again, right where you stand. Throw away all anxieties; throw away all pride; throw away all vanity; throw away all shame; throw everything away that stands between you and your soul's highest good. There is nothing of a man but to obey God, and to let the fullness of the Divine blessing fill his as he obeys.

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Religious Intelligence.

Revivals in Great Britain.

Papers received by last English mail furnish gratifying intelligence of the progress of the work of God. The remarkable revival among the fishing population in parts of Scotland still continues.

PORTESIE HOME MISSION.

The *Methodist Recorder* gives the following communication from the Rev. Thomas Major:—Since the first account of the revival was published the work has extended to other places besides Portesie and Finchochy. These two villages are inhabited by fishermen, and have a joint population of fifteen hundred souls. The first drops of the coming shower were felt early in August last, when a woman cried aloud for mercy under the opening prayer. When the men returned from the autumn herring fishery in September there was a general conviction that God was about to pour out his Spirit. A few weeks later forty of the members met together in a social tea meeting. After the benediction had been pronounced, several men rose to testify that they durst not go home until they had confessed their unfaithfulness, and it was midnight ere we could separate. Men wept like children as they told how uselessly they had lived, and lamented their want of care for souls.

The revival had begun in the Church, and from that day there was a continued expectation of converts. The work was not confined to Portesie and Finchochy. These two villages are inhabited by fishermen, and have a joint population of fifteen hundred souls. The first drops of the coming shower were felt early in August last, when a woman cried aloud for mercy under the opening prayer. When the men returned from the autumn herring fishery in September there was a general conviction that God was about to pour out his Spirit. A few weeks later forty of the members met together in a social tea meeting. After the benediction had been pronounced, several men rose to testify that they durst not go home until they had confessed their unfaithfulness, and it was midnight ere we could separate. Men wept like children as they told how uselessly they had lived, and lamented their want of care for souls.

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views of the plan of salvation; and thirdly, a wonderful maturity of experience.

Almost all the meetings were led by fishermen of various denominations. Ministers who assisted in the work declined to take the lead, as Providence seemed to have placed it in the hands of laymen. We believe this was wisely ordered. It lifted the work above the possibility of sectarian jealousy, and united the

