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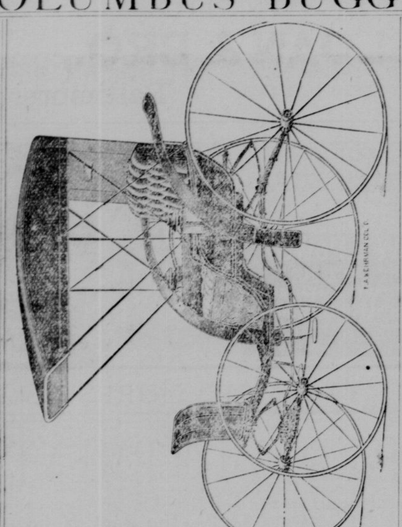

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CHAPTER VIII.

"You are Mrs. Charter's husband," said I

It was about Christmas of the year of which I have last been speaking—I hope the reader's ideas of my chronology are not utterly disarranged—that my views arrived at the extreme which I have indicated. About two months later came the catastrophe.

It was Mrs. Maples who suggested to me the idea of going to the Young Maennerchor carnival on our own private account. I had fully intended to go, though I had only thought of going in a party; but I at once approved of her scheme. For of course I agreed that it would be much more amusing for us to go together with a single cavalier and attack not only the world of our acquaintance, but also our familiar and intimate circle.

"My dear," said, "if we can manage it carefully enough we'll have all the men, and especially my husband, stunned and frantic." And I laughed with delight when I thought of the manner in which I would perplex the wits of my poor Penny, whose perceptions were never at any time extraordinarily acute. The first step was to decide on a cavalier; the rest to arrange our plans.

I may pause for a moment to say that it must not be supposed that when I have spoken of our little set that I have meant to imply that my field of operations had become limited. I was still at the height of popularity and success—as much quoted and flattered as ever. Yet it is true that I did not touch all points within my reach, and I dare say that I might soon have lost my fame and become wholly identified with the pleasure seeking set which most I affected.

Thus, though I could at that time have picked out almost any man in society to assist Mrs. Maples and myself in our little adventure, I turned over in my mind only the men of whom I have lately been speaking. Mrs. Maples seemed rather to wish for Captain Brague, but I thought it would not be quite politic for me to undertake such an adventure in his company, for I knew, though it affected me very little, that we had been considerably talked about. It was flagrantly unjust, for the captain and I had never become even intimate, though we had been together a good deal, and the only fault that ought to have been found with us by society was that we, neither of us, had anything particular to do; it made no difference that we sometimes preferred to do it together.

Even my mother appeared to be anxious about me on his account. She was now living by herself in a comfortable little house, my sister (who had in the most ungrateful manner refused to take advantage of the opportunities which I in the endeavor to do my duty by her had offered to her) having left the maternal roof to live in Lancaster! Actually she married a farmer. My mother, accordingly, had more time to bestow on me—when she could catch me—and in our conversations she exhibited a good deal of uneasiness about my way of life. "You are too rapid, my dear Ethel," said she. "Such a place will ruin your health if you don't take care, and there's always the chance that you may get into some other kind of trouble." But I met her objections with an unanswerable argument when I pointed out to her the difference between my sister's affairs and mine, and asked her which of her daughters she considered to be the most fortunate.

So, as I say, I determined not to call upon the captain for assistance, and agreed without any particular demur to Mrs. Maples' next suggestion—which was of Bran Boulter. As to our plans, they were easily framed, and the only thing to do was to carry them out carefully. I managed to be free on the evening of the ball in such a manner as not to run the chance of arousing Penny's suspicions; when he asked me in a perfunctory manner if I did not wish to go I hesitated just long enough to make him think that I really did not care about it; and of course there was no difficulty in keeping my costume out of his sight. Emma Maples and I had agreed to dress alike in order the better to be able to confuse our friends, and we fixed on white dominos with tasseled hoods and white silk vizards as our costume. Bran Boulter was to call for Emma and then go to my mother's house for me.

But on the evening of the appointed day, when, after having seen Penny go off with his cigar, I had gone to my mother's and was sitting in the parlor waiting, I was inclined to be sorry that I had not agreed to go with the captain. For on the afternoon of that very day something had occurred which had considerably enlightened me as to the reason of Bran's changed condition. He met me in Walnut street and walked home with me. It was a gorgeous afternoon; the russet bar of the sunset glowed at the end of the vista of the street, fading off into the cold pale blue of the wintry sky; the heaps of snow and the darkening pavements about us were beginning to chill the air which had caught a little glow of cheerfulness during the day from the glittering sun; dark through the leafless trees in the square moved the hurrying forms of workmen, and the crunch of their feet on the snow sounded crisp and strong.

I was glad to be walking briskly against the empty cold; the little patches of dusted snow on which I trod seemed elastic and invigorating. When we came indoors out of the falling darkness I pulled off my sealskin coat quickly and ran to the soft coal fire in the back drawing room, and stood looking into its elfin blaze, shading my glowing cheek with benumbed hands. Presently I began to rub my hands over the heat.

"Are your hands cold?" said Bran; there was a deep tremble in his voice.

"Yes," said I.

Without saying anything more he took one of my hands in both of his and began stroking it slowly. I looked up at him quickly. The room was unlighted, save by the fire, and as he leaned against the mantel the firelight flickered on his face. A sudden apprehension took possession of me—his intent gaze must mean something. "Is it possible," said I—my hand still lay passive in his—"is it possible that—that"—

"That you are the cause of all my troubles?" said he. "Yes, it is."

I looked away from him and into the fire. My first impulse had been to draw my head away instantly, but unfortunately I hesitated. I really did not sufficiently think of the situation. Bran's presence that afternoon had somehow affected me. I had been delighted to see him when he stopped; it was like old times; I felt like his cousin, his old comrade, and the old fondness for him returned, as it would every now and then. All the way up the street I had been lightly remembering the old days, and now I forgot myself and delayed the instant of reason and reproof! But the fire gave me no counsel. I watched it for a little while in silence, knowing that his eyes were on me all the time. Poor boy, poor boy! So I had been to blame for all his unhappiness! I turned again presently and looked at him steadily. "You should not say this to me," I said. "You must go."

He dropped my hand and left me. So, as I said, I was very thoughtful as I sat in my mother's little parlor and waited for him and Emma Maples. My chief trouble was to fix the exact amount of my own responsibility, but the more I thought the more it seemed to be reduced, and though at first I had felt almost as soft hearted about him as on that eventful evening when I had refused him, finally, becoming somewhat impatient as he and Emma Maples still delayed, I decided that if anybody was to blame Bran Boulter was, for I had given him absolutely no encouragement, and if his foolish speeches to me while we drove through the park together had been based upon the supposition that I was encouraging Captain Brague, why he deserved the additional unhappiness which he would now receive from having mistaken my meaning when I told him not to fear his fate too much. He need not run after me unless he wants to, said I, and of course he must do so no longer. I was really sorry for the poor boy; I seemed fated to destroy his happiness; but I clearly was not to blame. While I was trying to think over the best way to reprove poor Bran—dear me! what an unnecessary amount of trouble I seemed to be having—the door bell rang, and presently he came in alone!

"Where's Emma? Where's Mrs. Maples?" said I.

"She can't go," said he. "Here's a note from her"

I took the note—she simply said that she had a bad headache and could not go; she was awfully sorry and begged me to enjoy myself without thinking of her. I mused over the letter for a little while. It was my duty, I suppose, considering the circumstances, to give up the expedition. I had at last succeeded in justifying my going at all on the argument that Mrs. Maples' presence would do away with all possibility of suspicion on Bran's part that I did not mean to be angry with him. But now?

Well, after all, what harm could there be in going? I had quite made up my mind to be very serious with him, and in the meantime there was no reason why I should lose any fun just because he had chosen to behave foolishly. When I had thus decided I looked up and said calmly:

"Then I suppose we shall have to go without her. What a pity she is not well." A slight movement passed over his features. I could not detect its import. "Dear me," I said to myself, "I hope he is not going to give me any more trouble! At all events I can treat him like a stick of wood, and if I am impassive, what can he do?" All at once I remembered that my domino was out in the carriage, and I stopped for a moment; at the end of which time I had decided that my costume was too conspicuous for me, and that I could very well make use of an old black domino and mask I had once had for some girlish frolic, and which I knew was somewhere among my mother's belongings. In a few minutes I had found it, leaving Bran with my mother, who had in the meantime come down stairs. I slipped it on in the vestibule, and presently we were off.

I felt quite a little pleasurable quiver of excitement as I jumped out of the carriage and passed up the steps of the Academy of Music. A gaping crowd of idlers stood about; curious looking women and absolutely extraordinary men were entering the building at the same time with myself. This was indeed delightful. I was soon on the floor, and holding in one hand a knot of jacquemi not roses which Bran had produced at the last moment, and which I thought it would complicate matters least to accept carelessly, I took a couple of turns around the room with him to get an idea of how I should begin for myself. Somehow or other the roofing over of the pit did not give the effect of as much size as I had expected; but there were throngs of people We were too late for the entrance of King Carnival, but plenty of gaudily dressed men of extremely Teutonic countenance helped to give somewhat of the appearance of a full masked ball.

It was curious to notice how differently different people regarded the affair. The honest German burghers came with their families, seeming to find nothing improper in bringing them. I saw several small girls with fair hair and tinseled dresses moving about in the crowd apparently perfectly at home. Up in the second gallery sat quite a number of folk who looked as sober as if they were at a lecture; in the proscenium boxes were knots of women draped as blackly as possible, who talked together mysteriously and made little sallies on to the floor guarded by pickets and vedettes of anxious cavaliers; unattached maskers ran about here and there, teasing one man, flying from another, bravely dressed women, scarcely masked at all, sat about in the parquet circle, and the men were everywhere.

Oh the men! I had heard tales, and had a general idea that they went on the sly; but to see the literary young men, and the sober middle aged married men, and the grave lawyers, and the stiff necked physicians actually there in the flesh was too delightful! I soon cast loose from Bran's arm, and telling him to keep a general eye on my movements, but not to appear to belong to me, started off on a career of amusement. I caught old Mr. Pelican waddling about in huge delight, laughing and gobbling. I tapped him on the shoulder and whispered to him that his granddaughter was following him in a blue mask, and that she was going to bring his wife after half-past ten.

I made out Letty Risquict through her disguise, and nearly scared her to death by telling her that Johnny Woodcock (he was crazy about her at that time) had found out that she had come, and was in an awful state, swearing vengeance on the man who had brought her. I left Mr. Latitude in speechless astonishment, having asked him with tender solicitude if he had been careful about his flannels, and had put his pills and his powders in his pocket; and oh, how I enjoyed myself with Penny! I came upon him quite suddenly in the middle of the room. He was surveying the scene with a look of thorough enjoyment on his face and a flower in his buttonhole. I tapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, my dear," said he, "and what do you want?"

"I know you," said I in squeaky tones.

"Do you? Well, I'll warrant I know you."

"You are Mrs. Charter's husband," said I, and turned as if to run away. As I expected, he was after me in a moment, laughing and a little red in the face, not knowing whether to be displeased or amused.

"You certainly are not Mr. Charter's wife," he said. "Take my arm and see if I don't know who you are."

We slipped out together into the corridor.

"Now take care what you say to me," said I. "How do you know that I am not in Mrs. Charter's confidence?"

"I know you would be too honorable to repeat to her what I am going to say to you," he replied. "I know you pretty well."

"Yes?"

"And I am very glad to have a chance to speak to you in this way, for now I can tell you what the cold atmosphere of society in which we have formerly met has always frozen on my lips."

"Ah!" said I.

"Yes—often have I seen you in the—er—the giddy whirl, looking like Aurora"—

"Goodness!" said I "You know I am a blonde!"

"I told you I knew you," said he. "Can I not see your eyes? Don't I know your voice? Yes, often have I seen you, beautiful as the day, and—and the sight of you has almost floored me." This last was rather unpoetical

"Ah, Mr. Charter," said I, pressing his arm, "this is very dangerous. Alas! I ought not to have come with you."

"Was the temptation so great?" said he, squeezing my arm in return till it was almost black and blue and gazing at me with the most egregious pair of sheep's eyes. I only sighed.

"Don't you remember what I said to you the last time we met—at?"— This was rather deep for Penny.

"At dinner?" said I. "When you gave me some almonds and asked me if I knew what the gift of an almond meant in Arabia?"

("Good Lord!" could almost hear him saying to himself, "to whom did I say that? I must have been coming it rather strong.")

"I told you that I did not know," said I. "I said it coldly, but I do know. I was afraid to say I did, for I feared that my feelings would overpower me." And I sighed again.

This last touch entirely overcame him, and for half an hour I amused myself by making him commit every description of folly Though I could not make him tell me who he thought I was, still I guessed his suspicions, and that was something. He begged me for a rose till I began to think he was crazy, and, in short, he "gave himself away" as completely as the faithful heart of a wife could possibly have wished I finally tore myself away from him, having secured his boutonniere, which I proposed to display to him the next time I caught him spooning on a bud.

Not all my adventures, however, were of a pleasing description. I was rather taken aback by the very rude manner in which I was accosted in the corridor by a perfectly strange man, and I suppose I must have showed some agitation, for he asked me in a discontented tone whether I had any business there, and told me it served me right for being in such a place. There, too, I met Johnny Woodcock, who really had harbored some vague suspicions of Letty's doings—he was in an awful temper, at any rate—and he marched up to me and gave me a positive lecture on my injudicious behavior.

I came very near losing my temper when he told me that he considered it his duty to remonstrate with a woman whom he plainly saw was very much out of place at the Maennerchor, for his remonstrances were by no means mild; but I remembered his jealousy and the excellent cause that the poor boy had to lose his head, and, instead of begging Bran to come to my assistance, only told Mr. Woodcock, in a tone of mock coy, that he need not disquiet himself, for I was not Letty, and I did not think she was in the building, to which taunt he replied that he should now make it his business to find out who I was. I slipped away from him then, for I did not care to be quarreling.

My excitement was cooled a little every now and then, moreover. The affair was bete in the pauses. The tobacco of which some of the men were redolent was awful—I knew too well myself what good tobacco was—and the tipsiness of others suggested the police station rather than a club dining room, which last I suppose I should not have minded so much. Taking it all in all, I was enjoying myself desperately, but I could not help feeling the shock of meeting every once in a while with somebody who thought the affair perfectly innocent or who insisted on making it horribly vulgar. I could not feel that I was continually misbehaving myself, nor could I feel that when I did misbehave I was misbehaving with good taste.

So I determined to cease the roguish little passages at arms with the men who crossed my course and the delightful teasing of my friends, to come away from the dear attraction of impropriety and to go home. I knew very well that the ball would be, well, Pandemonium, later on and I very much wished to stay it out, but I told myself that only one or two little misgivings had so far marred my pleasure, and that it would be better to go away while still on good terms with my entertainment. So I made a sign to Bran and told him that I wanted him to get the carriage. He pondered for a moment, and then said:

"I say, it's quite early. Don't you think you'd like to have a little supper before you go home?"

"I will get some supper at home," said I. "You shall come with me. Though—let me think a minute."

I hesitated, not because I minded taking him home with me, but because another idea had occurred to me. I made up my mind without much difficulty. Yes, I would do it—and oh, well, it really wasn't a case of vogue la galere. I had seen so little of Bran during the evening. He had been so calm and well behaved—possibly because it was still early—that it wasn't worth my while to be on my guard. "I suppose I ought to go home," I reflected; "but after all what difference can it make?" And then it will finish off my evening very comfortably, and it will be quite Venetian or quite Queen Anne!" so I said to Bran.

"I want you to do something for me. I want you to take me to a men's restaurant. I want to see what it is like. Will you?"

"Well, said he, with deliberation, "I will. But we'll have to get a table to ourselves in one of the smaller rooms, or something of that sort, you know."

I rather wished that Emma Maples had been with me; but I acquiesced, and he went to call the carriage.

Just as he came back to the vestibule where I was waiting I lifted the bunch of roses, which I still held in my hand, to my left shoulder, and then, on an idle impulse, I took a hairpin and fastened them there, patting them and pressing them to my domino. Suddenly I noticed Captain Brague looking at me very intently, and it just occurred to me that I had forgotten him! I had intended to find out for whom he took me. He had been watching me narrowly all the evening, and indeed had been following me about the Academy in a curious manner, and I was quite convinced that he had some special interest in me. If he thought I was some other woman I could personate her; if he suspected me of being myself tant mieux! I could lead him away from that suspicion, and then get him to talk about me. So, as I say, I was rather put out to find that I had missed the accomplishment of this plan.

For a moment I hesitated as to whether I should not stay and have it out with him, but I reflected that it would be too much trouble to make it plain to Bran why I had so signally favored the other, so I gave it up. "I must hurry, however," said I to myself, for the captain was making straight for me with eager eyes, and looking as if he had a claim on me. "Yes," I continued, "it's too late now." So I took Bran's arm and made him walk rather quickly through the door. Numbers of curious people were lounging about. As we brushed past them I turned to look for the captain. He was following us. "Too late, my gallant friend," said I, and waved my hand to him. At the moment that I did this I saw Penny also looking at me eagerly. He was close by my side.

"Good night," he said to me. "That is you, is it?"

"Oh, yes," said I. "Come along!"

And I tripped down the steps, and as Bran shut the door of the carriage, I fancied I caught a glimse of the captain on the steps of the Academy, looking after us irresolute.

In a few minutes the carriage stopped, and I saw that we were in front of a well known restaurant quite near to the Academy. Bran jumped out quickly and I followed him with some satisfaction. One or two men who were standing on the steps took their cigars from their mouths, puffing surprised clouds of smoke into the frosty air, and stared at me deliberately. Bran led the way into a little waiting room.

"Wait here a moment," said he, "while I go look up a waiter and find out about a table."

"But I want to go through the large rooms," said I. "I want to see the men, you know. I'm dying to find out what they're up to."

"I understand," said Bran. "But I'll make arrangements for our supper first."

So off he went. I sat down for an instant in a chair near the door of the salle d'attente, highly amusing with its stiffly gorgeous chairs, its extraordinary wall paper and its filigree looking glass. It ought to have been Queen Anne, I thought to myself. I would make a famous Sacharissa—though my domino isn't quite right for the character. How delightful it would be if Bran were only clad in—well, say in the disguise of a highwayman, or in satin small clothes, silk stockings, a cocked hat and a tie wig! How well he would look in them! Full of such thoughts I jumped up and went to the glass to see how I looked in a vizard.

Suddenly I heard a noise behind me. I saw in the glass the face of Captain Brague, who was looking into the room. Good heavens! he had followed me! Before I could turn he had rushed quickly to me and had clasped me fondly about the waist. Was he tipsy? He certainly was, by his way of speech: he spoke confidently and quickly:

"Sure, why didn't you let me know before that it was you, my dear? beg your pardon, but you've been so tantalizing this evening. I misdoubted it was you. Why did you come away with Boulter? Are you angry with me? Did I misunderstand the signal? My dear girl!"—

I loosened my mask while looking into the glass, and now, to my dismay, as I struggled to get away from Captain Brague, I gave it a push—and it dropped off upon the floor.

"There goes your mask," cried he. "Sure it's you and no mistake. Let me look at you"—

In spite of all I could do he caught sight of my face—I had not dared to speak for fear he should recognize my voice—and as I felt his arm relax and heard him give a quick exclamation I knew that he had recognized me. I lifted my head; flushed and angry, I was beginning to chide him, when I saw that his face wore the most extraordinary expression, a mixture of surprise and bewildered horror; and while he gazed at me with blank amaze the look of horror seemed to deepen as his eyes turned toward the door. I followed his look, and saw standing in the doorway, the very picture of sudden rage—my husband! As I turned to look at him Penny came forward and grasped me by the wrist.

"So," he said, "it was you! First with Boulter—and now I find you with that Irishman."

He gave my wrist a sudden swing and pushed me away from him. I remember that I thought at the time—for I was not sufficiently mistress of the situation to occupy myself with thinking what I ought to be doing—that it was exactly the gesture with which I had seen a hundred tenors and jeunes premiers fling from them an equal number of sopranidenheroines, and I was really rather amused at the thought. I wondered what was coming next, and mechanically put my wrist to my mouth.

Penny stood looking at me for a moment. He was evidently a little gris, and his hat was pushed down over his head. He must have followed me round from the the ball only an instant behind Captain Brague. What bad luck that they both should have found me! I heard Captain Brague begin to say something in an excited voice. I think he said that he didn't know it was Mrs. Charter; but I still looked at Penny, who scowled at me a moment longer, and then, with what I suppose was a muttered oath, shook his head with a sort of impulse of rage and rushed away. Then I comprehended, for the first time, what it all meant. I had just time to reflect that I was thankful that Bran had not come in while Penny was there—and then I fainted.

To be continued.

Balaam's First Step.

By holding himself aloof from the greatest movement of his day and by refusing to take a side Balaam had already laid himself open to temptation and really taken the side of evil. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Balaam did not dare explicitly to disobey God, but at heart he was separated from God's cause as it appeared in the world of his own time. Persons who are not cordially spending themselves on some good work are laying themselves open to temptation. The only way to escape being on the side of evil is to be on the side of good. This is a world in which neutrals have no chance or place at all. Balaam knew that God was in Israel, but he did not act on that knowledge, hence his fall. We also know where God is in our time. When it comes clearly home to your understanding that here or there is a good work to be done, God is speaking to you as he spoke to Balaam. You may not be able to clothe your ideas in such poetical language as Balaam, but there are movements in our society regarding which you can as certainly say, "God is there; and if I mean to be with God, and go forward with his kingdom, I must be there also."

Balaam, of course, had his excuses for not going to throw in his lot with Israel. It was a long way to go, though he did not spare his ass when he had to go as far for money. They had a good leader already, and he could only be second. But he knew that all these excuses were idle, and that in listening to them he was defrauding himself of his true career. And so do we defraud ourselves of our true career, and of the happiness and use meant for us, when we know where God and good are, and do not, if at all possible, throw ourselves into such movements. Nothing is more fatal to our character and our career than to refuse to do the good we can do. We have all some gift and some opportunity, just as Balaam had, and, as he, so have we our temptations. Money was his snare. Money or ease or applause or position or reputation may be ours; if we are yielding to it, and not using our knowledge of good for the advancement of God's cause, we have taken Balaam's first step.—Dr. Marcus Dods.

Religion presents few difficulties to the humble, many to the proud and insuperable ones to the vain.—Augustus W. Hare.

"My Father Knoweth."

Precious thought, my father knoweth,
In his love I rest;
For whate'er my father doeth
Must be always best.
Well I know the heart that planneth
Nought but good for me;
Joy and sorrow interwoven,
Love in all I see.

Precious thought, my father knoweth,
Careth for his child;
Bids me nestle closer to him
When the storms beat wild.
Though my earthly hopes are shattered,
And the teardrops fall,
Yet he is himself my solace,
Yea, my "all in all."

Sweet to tell him all he knoweth,
Roll on him the care,
Cast upon himself the burden
That I cannot bear.
Then without a care oppressing,
Simply to lie still,
Giving thanks to him for all things,
Since it is his will.

Oh, to trust him then more fully!
Just to simply move
In the conscious, calm enjoyment
Of the father's love.
Knowing that life's checkered pathway
Leadeth to his rest,
Satisfied the way he taketh
Must be always best.

—L. W. in Christian ... said.

HOW THEY ARE KEPT BACK.

The Natural Heart Devises Many Excuses for Delay.

Varro, a Roman author, said he sent in many directions to find out from men what they thought to be the chief good. He received three hundred and twenty different replies, so many opinions were there in the world as to what was really the chief good to be sought after and the chief joy to be received. Blessed be God, we are not left to a wild guess upon this subject, but we have in the Bible a positive statement of the fact that the highest good and the gladdest joy of the soul is the service of God. The religion of Jesus Christ is compared in the Bible to the light, but it is brighter than that. It is compared to the rock, but it is firmer than that. And the Lord Jesus Christ, the great central force of that religion, is represented as a shepherd, but he is more careful than a shepherd. He is represented as a captain of salvation, but he is braver than any earthly officer. He is represented as the morning star heralding the day, but he is a brighter and more glorious promise to the soul upon which he shines.

Now, if all these things are true, why is it that the vast majority of men do not come and receive this Christ and accept this gospel? There are those who are kept back from the religious life because they feel they are too young to come. They say: "We shall live twenty, or thirty, or forty, or sixty years, and in that long reach of God's mercy there will be plenty of time to attend to these things. Meanwhile let us eat, drink, and be merry." Are you too young to serve God? Yes, if you are too young to receive any mercies at his hand; if you are too young to sit at the table of his bounty; if you are too young to be clothed by his goodness, to be fed by his love, to be sheltered by his benefaction, to be cared for by his loving kindness—then you are too young. Yet the fact of your youth, instead of being the reason why you should stay away from Christ, is the very reason why you should come.

Especial promise is given to you now that will never be given to you again. Besides that, are you not aware of the fact that if you put off the day of grace until the years of your youth have passed, in all probability you put it off forever? Do you not know that if you take up the church records in any religious organization the world over you will find that the vast majority of those who find their way into the kingdom of Christ come in their early days? Do you not know that if a man allows twenty-five years of his life to pass without having found the peace and hope of the gospel, the strong probabilities are—twenty to one, one hundred to one—that he will die in his sins? Do you not know that the day of youth is the especial day of God's mercy; that you cannot, without infinite risk to your soul, adjourn the matter; that it is far easier to come to Christ at five years of age than at ten, at ten than at fifteen, at twenty than at twenty-five; and that if there are obstacles in the way now they will multiply and augment until Alps are piled on Alps and Himalayas on Himalayas, and you will never scale the heights?—Christian Herald.

"This Were Some Time a Paradox."

The president of the "American Secular union" says of the Bible that "it contains many excellent moral precepts, but these are so mixed up with what is immoral as to make contamination by contact imminent." This being so, it is strange that somehow good people study the Bible, but bad people do not. Nor is there a record anywhere of a man getting contamination by reading the Bible, while every day there occur instances of men being thoroughly reformed by the influence of this one book. Here is a very curious case of contradiction—an immoral book, which yet does not make its readers immoral, but on the contrary turns felons and profligates into models of upright living. Suppose that the American Secular union tries its hand at producing an ethical scheme which will work the transformations wrought by the Gospels. For surely they ought not to take away a tried remedial agency until they can furnish a better to put in its place.—Christian Intelligencer.

The Earth's Regeneration.

The earth was indeed beautiful in her virgin youth, comely as a bride adorned for her husband. But she has had many days of sorrow, having been divorced from her royal partner, the glorious cloud—symbol of the divine presence. These long ages "Ichabod" has been written on her walls, for, alas, "the glory has departed." Nevertheless, the days of her divorcement shall end, and the friendly cloud will again kiss her purified lips, and evermore dwell upon her radiant hills (Isa. iv, 4, 5). He who has told us of the birth of our planet by creation, has also predicted her second birth by the resurrection from the dead. —Christian Herald.

The Soul's Abbey.

Come, soul of mine, within the abbey stand—
Thy wondrous Westminster—and meditate
On memories of mortals, good and great;
Leave evermore what anxious cares have planned,
And deeds performed at selfish pride's command;
Enter the walls invisible, and wait,
Where urns and cenotaphs commemorate
Sublimest lives. Behold, on every hand,
Thy statued seekers of true glory's goal,
The pure, undaunted haters of the wrong.
Here ever, too, let passing years enroll
New names on tablets of the wise and strong.
Worship not men, but find for duty, soul,
Thy inspiration from this noble throng.
—William Farrand Livingston in Churchman.

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