

NOT AS WE WILL.

It is true that we choose not the parts we act in life, and to play them well is all that is required of us; but it is true, also, that instead of moving in the prescribed circle, we too often describe marvellously eccentric orbits, an irresistible force that it would be hard to define, hard to circumscribe, draws us from the even tenor of our way and often makes sad havoc with our lives. We have not executed what we planned, nor realized what we hoped, desire through still on the advance is weakened by a glimpse at the failures in the past, and Oh! why is it that struggling after the true, beautiful and good we are doomed to draw the pall over our dear dead hopes!

It is a melancholy pleasure to trace the devious course of the lives we most admire. Some have striven manfully against the powers that would drag them down, and the conflict long and fierce has resulted in their victory. Others have gone headlong to their own destruction, and in awe we stand before the wreck of genius. Neither ever gained the stepping stone to that plane of perfection after which they were striving. An unseen power was acting as the counter force and drawing them down.

And there are noble lives that we have placed before us as our paragons, striving to avoid their vices and emulate their virtues; but as we turn to compare the copy with the original, we find our lives at variance with all that we admired, and sick at heart "with all the chambers of our soul hung in sackcloth," we turn from the retrospect. And striving to rear a fabric so vast, are we not thwarted for our good? Yes, perhaps as we look on the fragments of our fallen structure we will throw aside the faulty tools of our own devising, dash down the idols that have served as our models, and look unto Him whom is alone able to mould us after His own perfect image.

STORIES WITH A MORAL.

We have come to the conclusion, be it wise or otherwise, to flee as from a pestilence from the articles, essays, &c., that come to us branded with a moral and a maxim, we have been forced to take refuge in this vow from the fearful avalanche of such literature, pouring in upon us from all sects and persuasions. The religious press justify their fictitious, nonsensical creations on the ground of the excellent morals they all contain, but how many, after wading through the trashy details of such a book are again going to thread the labyrinth in search of the moral, for to be discovered a second effort is indispensable, and then oft times microscopic aid must be summoned. We rather congratulate ourselves that we have past the age when Sunday school books formed an important part of our literature since all that we remember were a mass of sentimentalism with a dash of religion as a spicing, and much of the same spirit is shared by our simple-minded tracts. And some times startling fallacies in theology creep into this hybrid literature, for what else shall we term that which is neither fact nor fiction, a fallacy in conception is ignored for the beauty of expression. No wonder so many Utopian

schemes originate in the minds of men whose boyish fancies fed on fiction; that works of the imagination are a necessary means of education, we do not deny but do not blend the real with the imaginary in such a way that only by process of refining can we separate the x and y from the a and b. We expect to be deplorably behind the times as many recent publications will fall within our restriction, and we had just emerged from communion with the musty tomes where imagination had been busy with reproducing the gay and beautiful, the dreadful and sublime, until the weird forms of those by-gone days, seemed beckoning us to their orgies, in fact we have haunted their domain so often that they in turn haunt us and make night hideous by invading our dreams and drawing us into their fearful conspiracies. But we would rather spend the residue of our days among fossils and shades than turn for consolation to modern lectures founded on well-worn aphorisms.

The \$100 credited to St John's Lodge in our last issue was realized from the sale of the bale of cotton in Wilmington to the purchase of which St. John's Lodge, Wilmington Council, and Concord Chapter contributed.

MILTON'S ACCOUNT OF HIS BLINDNESS.

In 1654 Milton wrote a description of his blindness, and the symptoms which attended it, for the information of his friend Leonard Philara, a learned Athenian, who had expressed a desire to submit the case to an eminent French physician, celebrated for treatment of disorders of the eye. The letter is interesting for the particular description it gives of the poet's blindness, and also for the evidence it affords of his patience and resignation. The letter is as follows:

"When you unexpectedly came to London, and saw me who could no longer see, my affliction, which causes none to regard me with greater admiration, and perhaps many even with feelings of contempt, excited your tenderest sympathy and concern. You would not suffer me to abandon the hope of recovering my sight, and informed me that you had an intimate friend at Paris, Dr. Thevenot, who was particularly celebrated in disorders of the eyes, whom you would consult about mine, if I would enable you to lay before him the causes and symptoms of the complaint. I will do what you desire, lest I should seem to reject that aid which perhaps may be offered by heaven.

It is now, I think, about ten years since I perceived my vision to grow weak and dull. In the morning, if I began to read, as it was my custom, my eyes instantly ached intensely, but were refreshed after a little corporeal exercise. The candle which I looked at seemed as it were circled with a rainbow. Not long after the sight in the left part of my left eye, (which I lost some years before the other) became quite obscured, and prevented me from discerning any object on that side. The sight in my other eye has now been gradually and sensibly vanishing away for about three years; some months before it had entirely perished, though I stood motionless, every thing which I looked at seemed in motion to and fro. A stiff cloudy vapor seemed to have settled on my forehead and temples, which

usually occasions a sort of somnolent pressure upon my eyes and particularly from dinner till the evening. So that I often recollect what is said of the poet Phineas in the Argonautics:

A stupor deep his cloudy temples bound,  
And when he walk'd he seem'd as whirling round,  
Or in a feeble trance he speechless lay.

I ought not to omit that, while I had any sight left, as soon as I lay down on my bed and turned on either side, a flood of light used to gush from my closed eyelids. Then, as my sight became daily more impaired, the colors became more faint, and were emitted with a certain inward crackling sound but at present every species of illumination being, as it were, extinguished, there is diffused around me nothing but darkness, or darkness mingled and streaked with an ashy brown. Yet the darkness in which I am perpetually immersed, seemed always, both by night and day, to approach nearer to white than black; and when the eye is rolling in its socket, it admits a little particle of light as through a chink. And though your physician may kindle a small ray of hope, yet I make up my mind to the malady as quite incurable; and I often reflect, that as the wise man admonishes days of darkness are destined to each of us, the darkness which I experience less oppressive than that of the tomb, is owing to the singular goodness of the Deity, passed amid the pursuits of literature and the cheering salutations of friendship. But if, as is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God, why may not any one acquiesce in the privation of his sight when God has so amply furnished his mind and conscience with eyes. While He so tenderly provides for me while He so graciously leads me by the hand and conducts me on the way, I will, since it is His pleasure, rather rejoice than repine at being blind. And my dear Philara, whatever may be the event, I wish you adieu with no less courage and composure than if I had the eyes of a lynx."

"TIMOTHY! TIMOTHY!"

An exchange tells an anecdote of the late Timothy Coffin, an eloquent lawyer of New Bedford, which illustrates the old Quaker spirit and how ready it was to bear testimony against sin:

The lawyer, then quite young, was retained in a case. Not feeling himself prepared to plead, he was desirous of obtaining a postponement. As the court had already protracted its session beyond the usual period, and the jury were getting impatient to be released, he was aware that it would be impossible to procure such a postponement unless he could allege some extraordinary cause.

He had a lively imagination, and quickly formed a plan.

Rising, with his handkerchief to his eyes, he addressed the court in great apparent emotion:

"May it please the court, I have just heard of the dangerous illness of my venerable mother, who is lying at the point of death. Under such circumstances, much as I regret protracting an already lengthened session, I must request this case postponed. My feelings are so powerfully agitated that I should be unable to do justice to the case, feeling as I do that my proper place is at the bedside of my mother."

The pathetic appeal was suc-

cessful. Sympathy for the afflicted counsel pervaded all hearts, and the jurors were not sufficiently hard of heart to wish the business of the court to proceed at such a sacrifice of personal feelings.

The judge, a tender-hearted man, was about to grant the request, when the hush was broken by a shrill voice, which proceeded from a lady in a Quaker bonnet, bending over the railing of the gallery. It was the mother of the eloquent counsel, who, so far from being at the point of death, came without her son's knowledge to hear him plead.

"Timothy! Timothy!" she exclaimed, in a voice which could be heard all over the house; "Timothy! Timothy! how often have I chastised thee for lying!"

The court-room shook with laughter, and the eloquent counsel, the late Timothy Coffin, sat down completely nonplussed.

The case wasn't postponed.

SEVERE REBUKE.

John Locke, the English philosopher, was a favorite with many of the great noblemen of his age. They liked his robust sense and ready wit, and enjoyed even the sharp reproofs in which he occasionally indulged. On one occasion he had been invited to meet a select party at Lord Ashley's. When he came, they were playing at cards, and continued absorbed in the game for two or three hours.

For some time Locke looked on, and then began to write diligently in a blank book taken from his pocket. At length they asked him what he was writing. He answered,—

"My lords, I am improving myself the best I can in your company; for having impatiently waited this honor of being present at such a meeting of the wise men and great wits of the age, I thought I could not do better than write down your conversation, and here I have in substance all that has passed for this hour or two."

The noble lords were so ashamed at the written record of their frivolous talk, that they at once stopped card-playing, and began the discussion of an important subject.

Thomas Carlyle has uttered even a more pungent reproof of idle talk; "if we can permit God Almighty," he says, "to write down our conversation, thinking it good enough for him, any poor Boswell need not scruple to work his will of it."

The *Churchman* says: "A few days ago we were at the funeral of a dissolute creature who, after fifty years' soaking in the wine cask, had at last oozed away. The chancel was a floral exhibition; the coffin hidden under harps and crowns; and above rose a colossal anchor of camelias, the emblem of the hope that maketh not ashamed, safely fixed beyond the veil! What a mockery of Christian faith! What a contrast as the solemn services went forward, the lesson answering, "Be not deceived," to the Epicurean proverb, "Let us eat and drink;" and the Collect praying that we may "rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness?" Yet this is only one among many instances. Nothing is fairer than such decoration in itself. Bring white flowers for the dead child, or for the pure of heart, lying in the white garments of a holy life; but when the emblem is so changed to an elaborate, gross, painful shame, it is an affront to the truth."

A TALE OF THE SEA.

We find in an exchange this thrilling writer's tale of the sea: It was December. The wind had been blowing tempestuously several days, and our steamer (one of the Cunarders) could scarcely buffet the great waves that mounted high above her side. In the midst of anxieties for our own fate, the stirring report reached us that a wreck was discovered at a distance, with living beings aboard.

Our captain was inclined to make an effort to save them.

"Who will venture out in a life-boat?" he cried, pointing to the signals of distress. His voice had no tone of command, but seven sailors came forward at once and offered their services.

"Too heavy a sea," murmured the captain, while the men were manning the life-boat.

I had a great desire to see the countenances of men that showed such bravery. They were standing in the clear sunshine of mid-day, just as they departed.

Their faces were as white as death, and each feature was stamped with an expression of desperate resolve.

They put out to sea, and they reached the wreck safely. There they found eight Norwegians, who had been trading at the West Indies, and their cargo of sugar had been sunk, with everything on board.

About all that was left was the skylight, on which they were standing, and which rose two feet out of the water. They had subsisted entirely of salt pork hauled from the hold.

With scarcely any hope, they had hailed our vessel, which looked too stately to stop for so poor a little craft as theirs, even if she observed them. They made a proposal to try their own shattered boat, but the sailors would not consent, knowing she could not live in the waters.

One by one they were hauled from the ship with a rope tied round their waists. The worst part was to get them in safely from the boat to the steamer, the billows were rolling so very high.

But it was all finally accomplished, while the Cunard passengers looked on in a state of suspense, as the frail bark rode the great waves, or sunk below, apparently to rise no more.

Two dogs had survived the shipwreck, whom the sailors had no heart to leave behind. One planted himself firmly on the spot, refusing to move. But the other, seeing his friends venture out to sea tied with a rope, placidly followed their example, and was received on shipboard.

He instantly shook off the briny fluid, and began promenading the deck at his ease, as if it were the old ship, and he the master.

The excitement among the passengers were increasing, and their liveliest sympathies were awakened. A purse was raised for the Norwegians, but their gratitude was of such a nature that they would not accept it, and begged that it might be transferred to their benefactors.

There was another brief consultation, which ended in the raising of a second purse.

In the ladies' cabin eight little packages of gold were formerly presented to the Norwegians, who by the storm had been deprived of everything they possessed on earth, and yet who could not in their own sufferings forget their generous friends.