The Pittsburgh Gazette.

LETTERS FROM MRS. SWISSHELM.

NUMBER SIX.

(Correspondence of the Pittsburgh Gazette.)

The Responsibility of the Churches.

Among the causes which conspire to fill houses of ill fame, forcible and fraudulent abduction hold a prominent place; but for these, Christian people are not often responsible; and, in discussing the subject it is principally important to discover wherein they are to blame, as it is to them we must apply for the remedy. It is the Gospel that must redeem the world, and whether that Gospel is preached inside or outside the organizations which take the name of Christian, it is to its preaching we must look for the uplifting of humanity. In as far as an individual or a church is governed by the law of which "one jot or one title cannot pass away until all be fulfilled," in just that far is he or it, void of offence; and in so far as professing Christians fall short of the standard of the Divine law, in just that far are they "a stumbling block, and rock of offence." In this position stands the great mass of Christians, and almost every branch of the professedly Christian church.

They are a stumbling block in this, that they follow *i. e.* permit their members to follow the lead of the Parisian prostitutes who dictate what our women shall wear and when and how. It is a fact, too notorious for any one to plead ignorance of it, that the public prostitutes of Paris dictate what is, or what is not to be worn; and that our Christian women bow to their behests. One often wonders, as when they ordered tilting hoops, whether modesty is a virtue, whether it is a part of a true woman's nature, or only a whim. The Empress who used to set our fashions, has long since been laid upon the shelf as a leader of the ton, and has found herself unable to control the mode even in her own drawing room, where her husband's mistress has flaunted her new styles in the face of the insulted wife; and American Christian women have adopted these styles. Of course these women invent modes to suit their own purposes; and we are gravely told that the virtuous women of Paris are obliged to imitate them or forego the admiration of their own husbands. In other words, the worst class of women invent styles of dress for the worst kind of purposes, and respectable women enter into competition with them, for admiration, and fight the battle on the line laid down by the enemy.

By far the most elegant toilettes I have ever seen were on street-walkers, out proclaiming their shame, and writers tell us that the loose women of Baden Baden far surpass, in elegance of attire, any of the titled nobility who appear there; and, to my mind, it is one of the most unaccountable of all unaccountabilities that respectable women will consent to be converted into poor imitations of these magnificent moths. It is perfectly astonishing that they are not "left alone with their glory" until their contaminated finery is as disreputable as the means by which it is obtained; but, instead of contempt for the arts by which they lure souls to destruction, our Christian women render them that most subtle homage of imitation, and think, by adopting those same arts to produce a contrary effect from that for which they were contrived. Thus, they leave the more vain and thoughtless of their sex without restraint in their love of finery, and that love lures more souls to destruction than any other cause, and perhaps more than all other causes combined.

Fashion and finery are so essential that she is a brave woman who dares go to church in a last year's bonnet; and to gratify the love of dress, or rather to avoid the supposed odium of being unfashionably dressed, thousands of women sell themselves like sheep in the shambles. Can we wonder that it is so when the Church and Christian communities have joined with the vile women of the Old World—the recruiting sergeants of Satan's army—to make their allurements honorable? Who shall answer for the lost souls, who have gone astray in their attempts to be like the grand ladies who sweep to communion tables in velvets and satins, loaded with ephemeral gew-gaw trimmings, which cost enough to support a family for a year, while the poor shiver with cold and hunger? Who shall draw aside her dainty robes from the contaminating touch of a lost woman, when she has acted the part of tempter, in holding up a false standard of respectability.

Do not our fashionable ladies teach by every act of their lives that dress is the one thing needful, and what protest is made by those who profess to have come out from the world and to be separate? How can we expect poor girls to stand alone and upright against an overwhelming public opinion which says that beads, and bugles, and fringes, and folds, and flowers, and feathers, and a general conglomeration of fuddles, more costly than good clothes, and ephemeral as April snow, are essential to respectability? Christian women, or women whom the churches recognize as Christian, sacrifice the honor of their husbands, as business men, and the comfort of their children, for trimmings; and what right have they to blame the poor girls who sacrifice their own honor on the common shrine for a little more fringe and lace? What does a dress or cloak amount to without the price being doubled for something to be sewed on it, or plastered over it, or hung to it in some kind of way? The garment itself is a small matter; but the trimmings, the trimmings, and how to put them on! This is so great a perplexity, and so grave a matter of discussion, that I have sometimes wondered if we would not soon have a new edition of the book of Common Prayer, and have it introduced into all our churches, with a special petition, for every day of the year, asking wisdom to decide how the dress shall be trimmed for that particular day.

I intend no irreverence; for I do not understand how a Christian can think and talk two-thirds of her time on a subject that she cannot pray about, and if a woman's happiness and respectability do really depend on the kind of trimming she is to wear, and the forms in which it is put on, she ought to make it a subject of hourly prayer. How many professedly Christian women make it the great business of their lives to get dressed? No one should follow a business about which he or she cannot ask Divine direction. If engaged in any such, he or she should ask deliverance; and surely the Christian world never more needed deliverance than now, for a frightful responsibility is resting upon her. She has joined hands with the man thieves, and partaken with adulterers, not only in connection with our crowning national sin, but succumbing to the arts of the worst class of an infidel and licentious people, who are teaching us to sacrifice honor and virtue and domestic peace to the arts by which they lure men to destruction.

Until our churches shall make a stand against that inordinate love of ornament which sweeps all before it, we cannot hope to stay the licentiousness by which it was created, as a potent auxiliary. It has made its way, as an entering wedge, into thousands upon thousands of homes which still hold its ugly mother at bay; but thousands have entertained the offspring and found it a precursor to the parent vice. As men given over to a love of strong drink, will sacrifice all to gratify that love, so women given over to a love of finery will resign all for a little more gimp.

JANE G. SWISSHELM.

A Pennsylvania Leather-Stocking.

(Correspondence Pittsburgh Gazette.)

To visit the Pennsylvania oil regions and not meet with some individual possessing characteristics which render him conspicuous among all men, displays a lack of observation on the part of the visitor. There are a few oil princes, with rough corners just disappearing from their characters, fellows who, a few years ago, drove canal boat horses, broke stones or chopped cord wood to gain a livelihood, but who, during the flush times of the oil mania, managed to get rich through the stupidity and cupidity of the petroleum hunters. Then there are the smellers, a race of beings endowed with supernatural powers, who sniffle about a piece of land, at so many ducats per minute, to discover the presence of oil away down between the surface and China. When the smeller strikes the right place, his nasal organ is attracted to the ground, and he falls in spasms to the earth. These paroxysms last a few moments, when the charm is over, and the smeller arises, drives down a stake at the exact spot for the drill, pockets his fee and marches off. There are many who take large stock in the supernatural powers of the smeller, and would go their last dollar to follow his nose in development. The faith in the ability of the smeller to scent out oil localities has been materially strengthened of late by the actual discovery of good sites for wells, and the fellows are reaping a rich harvest out of the credulity of those engaged in the development of new territories.

There are other eccentric classes worthy of place here, but we will take the better side of life for a brief sketch of a character who is universally known throughout the region and who occupies a large share of veneration and respect. By common consent and custom he is familiarly called "Uncle Billy, the hunter," but he was christened, some seventy-one years ago, William Groves. He was born of parents who were born before those of early pioneer settlers of America. Originally from Belgium—where many millions of dollars are now stowed away in judicial coffers awaiting the claims to be made good of several brigades of the heirs of the first Groves who crossed the deep blue sea—this race of people brought into America many of the traits and characteristics of *der faderland*, but rapidly fell into the habits and customs of the wild country in which they had cast their lot, and became daring and intrepid hunters and backwoodsmen. The early traditions of the State teem with exploits of bravery, endurance and achievements of the elder Groveses, and while Uncle Billy is the last of the original stock who gave themselves up to a semi-nomadic life, he is none the less a good specimen of the pioneers who figured before him. He was introduced to life in 1797. His father shared the glory of sending "Bigfoot" into eternity by way of a bullet wound and the Ohio river, an adventure which made Major Brady famous in the history of the country. Uncle Billy is the very ideal of a hunter, a veritable leather-stocking. He is hale and hearty, quick in action, fleet-footed, wiry and muscular. He has two sharp gray eyes—all good hunters have gray eyes—which are strangers to glasses, strong as those belonging to the ordinary run of people at one-third his age. There is a look of intelligence about Uncle Billy, and the air of a true American sovereign. His ruddy, glowing face, having here and there deep set wrinkles, beams with benevolence and kindness. He moves with a quick, nervous stride, and thinks nothing of walking thirty or forty miles a day on a hunting excursion. Let the grumbling, gouty old men at home, who are hauled about on easy chairs, and have scarce life enough in their bodies to arouse from their languid inertness, think of this and contrast their own condition with that of the old hunter of Forest county.

Uncle Billy is a hunter from instinct, training and desire. He has a philosophy of his own, rude and crude, and yet broad enough to admit of no doubt as to its sincerity. He holds that man was placed upon earth, not to amass a fortune, nor make his name illustrious. Peace of mind, contentment, happiness, and enjoyment, are the objects to be sought in this world of ours, rather than wealth, notoriety or fame. For full three score years Uncle Billy has satisfied his ambition by attending to his farm in Summer time and through Fall and Winter leveling his rifle at royal game and making the wildest retreat of the forest his castle. What cared he for the wealth poured forth at the feet of man out of the bowels of the earth, so long as *all* the deer roaming the wilds of Venango and Forest counties were not driven from his reach by the onward march of the army of speculators. He despised the tempting offers, running into tens of thousands of dollars, for the old farm on which he, with his family, lived and thrived, and looked upon the greedy site hunters with no charitable eye, seeing in each one of them a full contradiction of his philosophical ideas of life. Uncle Billy did not envy his neighbors on French Creek, who rolled in wealth, because, forsooth, they had chosen to change places with men of capital; but prosecuting his agricultural labors with becoming zeal, felt satisfied that want and hunger remained from his doors. The harvest was before him; the forest with its bountiful wild game, his rifle, his eye, his unerring shot, remained to strengthen his ideas of contentment, and he was happy. Could all men partake of his self-satisfied nature, a happy world we would have.

Uncle Billy is as full of the anecdote of adventure as any other living man on the face of the globe. He has had dealings with everything and everybody short of Belzebub. Some of his stories would put the best contributors of the New York *Ledger* to shame. Uncle Billy would run on all day, and night, too, in interesting story, if we had the time to listen to him. He would prove a fortune to any author of the Sylvanus Cobb school of literature, as he could, out of his own experience, furnish food enough for hundreds of long drawn out stories. He has fought Indians, and wolves, and bears, and snakes, and panthers, from Maine to Mexico. He knows every strip of forest in the State by heart, has a name for every towering hill or mountain, has islands marked with unerring fidelity, and creeks, and runs, and river bends traced with marvellous accuracy on the map of his brain. He can track a deer or follow a bear any number of miles by the faintest trail, and as a marksman is truly perfect.

While hunting with him, he was disappointed that he had no fair opportunity of displaying his rifle skill, and in the absence of game he determined to waste two bullets for his own glorification. Seeing, fully fifty yard from him, a stick of wood, about one inch in diameter, standing horizontally in the middle of a shallow spot in the river, he took aim straight from his shoulder and the bullet sped to its mark, cutting it in twain. "That would have torn the antlers from a buck," coolly remarked Uncle Billy, in a tone of self-satisfaction with the result of his shot, "but now I'll show you how I would blind the eye of a bear at one hundred yards." Pointing to a delicate spot of white moss on a tree about that distance away, he took aim, and the bullet, faithful to a nicety, drove the mark into the bark. Our eyes being of a much later style than Uncle Billy's, we followed suit and shot a bullet clear of the tree, a result by no means flattering to our vanity.

Altogether, our hero, is a study. A man of sound sense, of well cultured mind and self started train of thought, he is for aught we know to the contrary, the best living type of the American hunter and backwoodsman. He averages one hundred deer and considerable other game every winter season, which brings him a handsome revenue. He is of a religious turn of mind, too, but adheres to no sectarian belief, finding the foundation of his faith in the grandeur of nature. He knows God through His handiwork, and worships Him in the temple of the Forest, where awful silence forever reigns, and where unspoken sermons, more powerful than man could utter, lay unction to his soul from the rocks and rills about him. On the Sabbath, with no eye but that of the God Eternal resting upon him, Uncle Billy enjoys repose, and would not harm anything breathing life. He observes the Lord's day because it is the Lord's day, not like those laying higher claims to christianity, governed by the world's opinions rather than the promptings of conscience. Uncle Billy believes that his hunting days are drawing to a close. He reads in the many years through which he has passed the penalty of mortality—the warning that death can not be far distant, but he trembles not. Having abiding faith in the merits of his Redeemer he is ready to pass away when the awful summons comes. He has a presentment that he will die suddenly; all of his forefathers have died aged, but without many hours for immediate preparation. Sickness has been a stranger to him through life, and he feels that when the human machinery which now propels him forward becomes disordered, a general breaking up will take place, and the engine of life will suddenly stop forever. He would be buried in the forest where the mighty chorus of nodding trees chant endless praises to the Creator, and where Nature forever holds communion with Nature's God.

H.

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