



THE CHURCH, WALKING WITH THE WORLD

1

The Church and the World walked far apart
On the changing shore of time-
The World was singing a giddy song,
And the Church a hymn sublime.
"Come, give me your hand," said the merry World,
"And walk with me, this way!"
But the good Church hid her. Snowy hands
And solemnly answered, "Nay,
I will not give you my hand," she said,
"And I will not walk with you;
Your way is the way of eternal death;
And your words are all untrue."

2

"Nay, walk with me but a little space,"
Said the World with a kindly air;
"The road I walk is a pleasant road,
And the sun shines always there;
Your path is narrow and thorny and rough,
While mine is flowery and smooth;
Your lot is sad with, reproach and toil,
While in rounds of joy I move.
The sky to me is always blue,
No want, no toil I know;
The sky above you is always dark,
Your lot is a lot of woe.
My way, you can see, is a broad fair one,

And my gate is high and wide;
There is room enough for you and for me,
And we'll travel side by side."

3

Half shyly the Church approached the world
And gave him her hand of snow;
And the old World grasped, it and walked along,
And whispered in accents low,
"Your dress is too simple to please my taste;
I have gold and pearls to wear,
Rich velvets and silks for your graceful form,
And diamonds to deck your hair."
The Church looked down at her plain white robes,
And then at the dazzling World,
And blushed as she saw his handsome lip
With a smile contemptuous curled.

4

"I will change my dress for a costlier one,
Said the Church with a smile of grace;
Then her pure white garments drifted away,
And the World gave in their place,
Beautiful satins, and fashionable silks,
And roses and gems and pearls;
While over her forehead her bright hair fell
Crisped in a thousand curls.

5

"Your house is too plain," said the proud old World,
"I will build you one like mine;
With walls of marble and towers of gold,
And furniture ever so fine."
He built her a costly and beautiful house;
Most splendid it was to behold;
Her sons and her beautiful daughters dwelt there
Gleaming in purple and gold;
Rich fairs and shows in the halls were held,
And the World and his children were there,
Laughter and music and feasting were heard
In the place that was meant for prayer.
There were cushioned seats for the rich and gay,
To sit in their pomp and pride;
But the poor who were clad in shabby array,
Sat meekly down outside.

6

"Your preachers are all too old and plain,"
 Said the gay World with a sneer
 "They frighten my children with dreadful tales,
 Which I like not for them to hear.
 They warn of judgments- and fire and pain,
 Of doom of the darkest night,
 And speak of a place that should not be,
 Mentioned to ears polite.
 I will send you some of a better stamp;
 More brilliant and gay and fast,
 Who will show how men may live as they list,
 And then get to heaven at last.
 The Father is merciful, great, and good,
 Tender, loving and kind,
 Do you think He would take one child to heaven!
 And leave another behind?"
 So she sent for pleasing and gay divines,
 Deemed gifted and great and learned,
 And the plain old men who had preached the cross
 Were out of her pulpits turned.

7

Then Mammon came in supporting the Church,
 And rented a prominent pew;
 And preaching and singing and floral display
 Proclaimed a gospel new.
 Then fair and festival, frolics untold
 Were held in the place of prayer,
 And maidens, bewitching as sirens of old,
 With worldly graces rare,
 Thought up the very cunningest tricks,
 Untrammelled by gospel or laws,
 To beguile, and amuse, and win from the World
 Some help for the righteous cause.

8

The angel of mercy flew over the Church,
 And whispered, "I know thy sin!"
 Then the Church looked sad and earnestly longed
 To gather her children in.
 But some were out at the midnight ball,
 And some were at the play;
 And some were drinking in gay saloons,
 So she quietly turned away.

Then said the World in soothing tones,
"Your children mean no harm,
Merely indulging in innocent sports."
So she leaned on his proffered arm,
And smiled, and chatted, and gathered flowers,
And walked along with the World.
While countless millions of precious souls
O'er the fearful brink were hurled.

9

"You give too much to the poor," said the World,
"Far more than you ought to do.
Though the poor need shelter, food, and clothes,
Why should that trouble you?
And afar to the heathen in foreign lands
Your thoughts need never roam-
The Father of mercies will care for them.
Let charity stay at home.
Go, take your money and buy rich robes,
And horses and carriages fine;
Roses, and jewels, and dainty food,
And rarest and costliest wine;
My children just dote on all these things,
And if you their love would win,
You must do as they do, and walk in the way
That they are walking in.

10

So the Church drew tightly the strings of her purse,
And gracefully lowered her head,
And simpered, "I've given too much away,
I will do, Sir, as you have said."
So the poor were turned from her door in scorn;
She heard not the orphan's cry;
She drew her beautiful robes aside
As the widows went weeping by.
Her missions treasuries beggarly pled,
And Jesus commands were vain,
As half the millions for whom He died
Had never heard of His name.

11

Then they of the Church and they of the World
Walked onward hand and heart,
And only the Master, who knoweth all,

Could tell the two apart.
Then the Church sat down at her ease, and said,
"I am rich and in goods increased;
I have need of nothing and naught to do
But to laugh and dance and feast."
The sly World heard it and laughed in his Sleeve,
And mockingly said, aside--
"The Church has fallen, the beautiful Church;_
And her shame is her boast and her pride."

12

The angel drew near to the mercy seat,
And whispered in sighs her name;
Then the loud anthems of rapture were hushed,
And heads were covered with shame;
And a voice was heard at last by the Church,
From Him who sat on the throne,
"I know thy works, and how thou hast said
"I am rich" but thou hast not known
That thou art poor and naked and blind,
With pride and with ruin enthralled.
The intended bride of a heavenly groom
Is companion of the World.
Go, humble thy heart and confess thy sin,
Let shame now cover thy face,
Or else--alas--I must cast thee out,
And blot thy name from its place.

Matilda C. Edwards

