

TWO MINUTE
TALKS

AMOS R. WELLS



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Two-Minute Talks

Short Discussions of Long Themes

By
AMOS R. WELLS



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY

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PREFACE

THESE tiny chapters are not intended to settle things.

In one way of thinking, it is preposterous to discuss immortality, or some similarly great theme, within the narrow confines of five hundred words. From the reader's view-point, however, the proceeding is entirely satisfactory. It is far more pleasant to do one's own thinking than to receive wisdom ready-made from another.

That is what these little essays aim at,—to furnish starting-points and incentives for thought. To that end I have sought condensation, and have packed my pages as full as possible of meaty quotations and suggestive anecdotes and illustrations. Kernels, I hope these may prove, that, buried in the fruitful soil of earnest minds, may bring forth their sixty-fold and hundred-fold.

Therefore the only system to be found in this book is the system of a box of seeds. In the box, the grains lie in splendid disorder, uniform only in their happy potentialities. But I wish I were as sure of the thoughts' vitality as I should be of a harvest from the seeds!

AMOS R. WELLS.

Boston.

The Father's Care

“TAKE no anxious thought for your life” is a command of God as imperative as any in the Decalogue. “Let not your heart be troubled” is a Christian precept as essential as “Follow Me.” Indeed, worry leads to almost every other sin, and it is quite incompatible with the following of the Prince of Peace.

To worry is to slander God. It is to ask in all earnestness the question Luther's wife asked the great reformer when he was in a fit of depression: “*Is God dead?*” It is virtually to deny God's love, or His wisdom, or His power, or all three.

Because, if God loves you, and knows all about your needs, and has supreme ability to do just what is the best for you, what possible ground for anxiety can you have?

Will you fear poverty? But God is the Creator and Owner of all wealth; and we have His promise that if we seek first His righteousness, all other things shall be added to us.

Do we fear for our reputation, that we shall not receive the honor, fame, and station we desire? There is no honor that endures except what is registered in God's approval, and that is as sure to follow desert as daylight the rising of the sun.

Do we fear failure? The only failure is not to seek God's will. What men call failure is a broken wire; but God has a *wireless* telegraphy,

The Father's Care

and every desire to do right is sure of reaching the heart of the Almighty.

And I may even ask, Do you fear sin? Do you tremble before your own depravity, hide your head in the remembrance of your frequent yieldings to temptation, dread lest you lose your hold upon God altogether? Remember, *He has His hold upon you.* Though your weak grasp relax, His will not. Believe enough to know that God will help your unbelief. Trust God even for faith to trust Him. This is the climax and the reward of all faith.

Let God have His way, and He will form your fortune as is best fitted for you. Do you know that every leaf of a tree has its place? Try placing a branch from one tree among the branches of another kind of tree, and you will see how awkwardly it fits. And if God's providence looks out for leaves, will it neglect men?

God has not gone away and left this world to itself. The other day a special train was whirling along in the dark on the New York Central Railroad. Suddenly a flash of lightning showed the engineer a telegraph pole lying across the tracks. He had just time enough to stop the train. Was there no God in that lightning flash?

“In the great world there are no accidents :
 Enthroned above the ages' ebb and flow,
 Unseen, misunderstood,
God rules, who in all seasons and events,
 Through fiery evil and o'erwhelming woe,
 Forever works the good.”

Next Steps With God

ALL through the Bible, when God has a great work to carry on, we see Him raising up workers to continue it. So Isaac succeeded Abraham ; and Joshua, Moses ; and Samuel, Eli ; and Solomon, David ; and Elisha, Elijah ; and Ezekiel, Jeremiah ; and Nehemiah, Zerubbabel ; and Timothy, Paul. "God removes the workers, but carries on the work."

Sometimes when these great workers die, men think that the work they have been supporting will fall to the ground. But no ; it is as when men take the foundation from under a building, and it seems propped up on almost nothing. Soon, however, you see the building lifted gradually, and a new foundation laid, and new stories added that the old foundation was not strong enough to support.

Jabez Bunting was for nearly sixty years the great leader of the English Methodists. After his death a speaker at a memorial meeting said : "When Jabez Bunting died, the star of Methodism set." "Praise God, that's a lie !" fervently exclaimed one of the listeners. And it was.

Now there is only one way by which the pyramids could rise, and that was by each course being a little higher than the one below it. So there is only one way by which humanity can rise, and that is by each generation being a little wiser and stronger and better than the one before it. When we think of our noble fathers and

Next Steps With God

mothers it seems impossible for us to be half as good as they or do half as much; but if the world is to progress, we must even surpass them.

Of course we cannot do it in our own strength, any more than the stone could pile itself up into pyramids. When we think of the great duty of progress that rests upon us, what a comfort it is to remember that ours is a God of progress,—no stolid Buddha, but a Being who is continually moving onward, and carrying His obedient children with Him.

The path of obedience is always the path of progress. Do what your conscience tells you that God wants you to do, and little duties will open out surprisingly into glorious privileges. Moody was in training to succeed Finney, and the other great evangelists of the past, and he did not know it. But the boy, as his biographer says, “went to church every Sunday, because he had promised to go.” That led him to Sunday-school. Then he saw that he ought to join the church, and he did. Then he began to speak in the prayer-meeting, “much more zealously than grammatically.” And so he went on, taking little steps along the pathway of obedience, until he became one of the greatest men the world has known.

What Moody did, millions of others have done, not always so conspicuously before men, but just as really. Take next steps with God, and some day He will bring you out on top of a pyramid!

Our Possible Companion

A MAN is, largely, what his friends are. It is almost impossible to retain purity of character if your friends are vile, and quite impossible to live an evil life if your friends are all noble.

Recognizing this fact, who would not leap at the chance of having for his intimate companion a strong, true soul like Phillips Brooks, a beautiful spirit like Florence Nightingale, a great genius like Tennyson, a masterful leader like Gladstone? Would not all of us sacrifice much in order to enjoy such a comradeship?

And here is open to our constant companionship the Creator of all these great men and women, the Source of their noble impulses, the Fire of their genius, the Maintenance of their courage! There is nothing which one could desire of an earthly companion that is lacking in Him, while He has infinite resources that are beyond any worldly friendship. Is it not incomprehensible that we should slight such an opportunity, and sometimes neglect it altogether?

It is like accepting a post-office when we might as well have a kingdom.

No one that has ever made trial of this companionship but rejoices in it above all other joys. The misery of the world is because that companionship is lacking.

The basis of the companionship is prayer. But it is not all prayer. Much of it is merely listening, to hear God speak to the soul. Much of it is merely meditating on the loftiest themes.

Our Possible Companion

Much of it is merely living with God and working with Him.

When, in looking at a beautiful sunset, your heart turns adoringly to Jehovah, you are enjoying this companionship.

When, obeying an inward prompting, you go to some house of death to comfort the mourners with talk of the Lord of life, you are enjoying this companionship.

When, in your Bible-reading, you stop, filled with sudden, glad amazement at some vast truth, you are enjoying this companionship.

When, in talking with a friend, you two hold sweet discourse of God, and a peace steals over your spirits, and the sense as of an Emmaus benediction, you are enjoying this companionship.

Thus you may have this companionship at all times, when you are by yourself, or with men or nature, as when you are consciously and purposely alone with God.

And, alas! you may also forego this companionship, annul it, and drive it from you. God is visible and audible; but the eyes and ears of the soul are so easily closed! The world is so interesting; alas, that it should destroy our interest in the One who makes it interesting!

You wish and expect to spend eternity with God. Think what it means, then, if you are losing the sense of His presence, the joy of His companionship! It means what it signifies to the young artist to become blind, the young musician to become deaf, the young orator to become dumb. It destroys your occupation for eternity, when you lose your companionship with God!

Big on the Inside

IN the vegetable kingdom, there is no such thing as standing still, year after year. Either a tree is pushing out new roots and new branches every spring, enlarging its girth and increasing its height, or its branches are withering, its trunk is rotting at the core, and the entire tree is on the way to ruin.

Also in the kingdom of the spirit there is no standing still. Either your soul is bearing new fruit, and strengthening itself ever to bear more fruit, or the power of fruit-bearing is passing from it, perhaps forever.

Therefore you can hardly ask yourself a more serious question than this, "Am I growing in my spiritual life?" And you can hardly consider a matter more important than the means to such a growth, for time and for eternity.

"If I had a son," once said a distinguished theological professor, "I should tell him many times a day to make himself *as big a man on the inside* as possible." Men are too much occupied with outside growth, or the appearance of it; with large salaries, important positions, men's applause. Look rather within. Get soul power, get riches of the mind, and the outer life will follow.

No tree can grow without tree food, and neither can a man's spirit grow without spiritual food. What would you think of a man who should not take any food except what he could manufacture himself? He would starve in a few days. But we are all the time forgetting to go outside our-

Big on the Inside

selves for our spiritual food, and no wonder our souls are often starving.

Where shall we seek these supplies?

First, in the Bible. If every Christian should take, every morning, a single Bible verse, and meditate upon it for fifteen minutes, the power of the church and the happiness of Christians would be increased many times.

Then, in prayer. Prayer is talking with God. Much so-called prayer is only talking *to* God. Prayer that means growth requires two things, that there is something you really want, and that you continue to pray till you get an answer.

Another means of growth is struggle. Trials are like the winds that toughen the tree's fibre. They are more than that to the soul, for they actually make it grow, just as exercise makes a child grow. Sickness, disappointment, failure, poverty, bereavement, if they are borne in the spirit of Christ, draw one up toward the stature of Christ.

But after all, just as the chief element in plant growth is the sunshine, so the chief element in soul growth is love. Love God, and you will grow in power of serving Him. Love men, and you will grow in ability to help them. Love is an unfolding. There is no school like love. That is why we are going to grow in heaven far more than on earth—because we shall love far better. As Miss Havergal sings, we are to go on

“ ‘From glory unto glory,’ with no limit and no veil,
With wings that cannot weary and hearts that cannot fail;
Within, without, no hindrance, no barrier as we soar,
And never interruption to the endless ‘more and more.’ ”

Go Straight for It

ONE of the presidents of the London Chamber of Commerce, a man of long and eminently successful business experience, was once asked to write down the principles that, in his judgment, would insure success. He wrote a number of sage maxims, but the first two are especially worth heeding: "Have a definite aim. Go straight for it!"

If we are to accomplish anything whatever, it must be by means of a clear-cut purpose coupled with a determined will. A vague desire to be better and do more will profit nothing. The accomplishing Christian must heed the stirring words of Phillips Brooks, who cried: "Come, take that task of yours which you have been hesitating before, and shirking, and walking around, and on this very day lift it up and do it."

Heaven will not help us, even to do heavenly work, until we first help ourselves. Max Müller, the great student of Oriental languages, once asked a certain Hindu whether Ramkrishna, the Hindu teacher, knew Sanskrit. "Yes," was the reply. "Ramkrishna was living in the jungle, and a beautiful woman, coming down from heaven, taught him Sanskrit." "Nonsense!" cried Müller, impolitely but sensibly. "The only way to learn Sanskrit is to get a grammar and a dictionary and go to work." And that is the only way to learn the language of heaven—do God's will.

It may not be a large work, this new work you

Go Straight for It

are to undertake for your Lord ; but you can undertake it in a large spirit. I very much admire that laborer who stood outside Cologne Cathedral and said to a traveler, " Yes, it's a fine building, and took us many a year to finish." " Took you?" exclaimed the traveler. " Why, what did you have to do with it?" The reply was sufficient and convincing : " I mixed the mortar, sir." Lowell's lines are as true of work for Christ as of secular employment :

" No man is born into the world whose work
Is not born with him ; there is always work
And tools to work withal for those who will
And blessed are the horny hands of toil !
The busy world shoves angrily aside
The man who stands with arms akimbo set
Until occasion tells him what to do,
And he who waits to have his task marked out
Shall die and leave his errand unfulfilled."

And though your work may be small, make it as great as you can ! " The real worker," declared Joseph Parker, " never says, ' How little can I do ? ' but always, ' How much can I do ? ' " In the church there are, even yet, sadly few ambitious souls. It is better to speak convincingly the praises of Jesus than to win cases before a jury or carry a bill through a senate. It is better to discover new ways of reaching souls with God's truth than to discover the North Pole. It is better to win one victory over evil than to conquer the most brilliant army ever brought into the field.

What Heaven is Like

ALL we know about heaven we know from the Bible, and we know all that we need to know. We know enough to fill us with happy confidence and exultant hopes. And all we know is upon the authority of the only being who ever came out of heaven to report to our humanity its character and its glories, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For one thing, the Bible assures us that in heaven there is room for everybody. The Jewish rabbis used to declare that, no matter how many hundreds of thousands came up to Jerusalem at the great feasts, the streets of the city and the courts of the temple were never crowded. That fancy is gloriously true of the New Jerusalem.

Our entrance to this wide heaven, the Bible teaches, is by a narrow way. There is only one Door. In ancient days, when the Christians were fighting the invading Turks, a mother, from the fortress, saw her son returning from a battle, defeated and in swift retreat. She shut the gates of the fortress and called to her son from the battlements, "You cannot enter except as conqueror!" At that heroic word the son returned to the fray and transformed defeat into victory. We cannot enter heaven except as conquerors, yes, and "more than conquerors," in Christ Jesus.

Probably the feature of heaven that is dearest to most hearts is its freedom from suffering and sorrow. Browning expressed the universal anticipation :

What Heaven is Like

“ But deep within my heart of heart there hid
Ever the confidence, amends for all,
That heaven repairs what wrongs earth’s journey did.”

No more lame feet or aching backs in heaven !
No more deaf ears or near-sighted eyes or throbbing heads ! All faces exquisite, all bodies strong and swift, all minds clear, all spirits at peace ! The wonder is that so many, believing this, yet dread the gates of death.

But to the sinner, wearied with the long struggle against temptation, saddened by remorse even while he is grateful for the victories which Christ has won for him, there is a joy in heaven far superior to the absence of pain. Some little girls were telling their thoughts of heaven. To one it was a place of lovely meadows and trees ; to another, a great, golden city ; a third thought of the singing, and still others, of the joy and safety and plenty of the celestial abodes. But last of all spoke a thoughtful lass : “ Heaven ; why, heaven, I think, is just a place where you’re never sorry.” That’s it exactly.

After all descriptions of heaven, even the glowing visions of the Apocalypse, there is one thought that always means heaven to the Christian : it is where Christ is. A little boy was once asked, “ Where is your home ? ” He didn’t know what to say, for his family had moved about a great deal, but he turned at last to his mother and leaned against her. “ My home’s where mother is,” he said. If the love of Christ has entered our hearts, then our heavenly home is where He is, in the next world and in this world alike.

Who Lives in Your House?

SHOW me a man's household, and I will show you the man! If love dwells there, he is lovely; if wisdom, he is wise; if prosperity, he is industrious. And if Christ dwells there, he has all these graces and blessings, and many more.

The legend of Helena relates how, when in search of the cross on which Christ died, she found three crosses. How could she tell which was the true cross? She took a corpse and placed it on the first, the second; it remained unchanged. But as soon as it touched the Saviour's cross it started into life.

That is the test and proof of Christ's presence—life, joy, beauty, power. In proportion as you have Christ, you have these. Christ is the silver lamp which, as Goethe relates, was left burning in the hut of the poor shepherd. And as it shone, it rapidly transformed the hut into a vast and beautiful palace. Such is the indwelling Christ.

This jubilant consciousness of Christ's presence is not always at its height. As Dr. Cummings says: A Christian has God's daylight in his soul when he may not have sunlight; that is, he has enough to light him, but not enough to cheer him."

It should be enough for us just to know that Christ is with us, leaving it to Him to manifest Himself in whatever way is best. When they threatened to banish Chrysostom if he did not renounce his Christianity, he replied, "Thou canst not, for the world is my Father's house."

Who Lives in Your House ?

When they threatened to kill him, he answered, "Thou canst not, for my life is hid with Christ in God." No one that has really entered into the sense of Christ's presence can be lonely or afraid.

And how can we obtain this priceless companionship? Only ask for it! Merely open our doors, and invite the Saviour in. He has been standing there, knocking, perhaps for many a year. Simply allow Him to do His will. Simply pray to Him :

" Be Thou my Friend, my close Companion ever !
Earth's paths diverge as comrades onward wend ;
Friends may depart, but Thou, oh, leave me never !
Be Thou my Friend.

" Be Thou my All ! Terrors sometimes enfold me ;
The vasts of Thy great universe appall.
Closer to Thy dear heart, oh, closer hold me ;
Be Thou my All ! "

Then, when we have the indwelling Christ, what next?

Let Him shine out !

Compton, the missionary, was on his way to India. In his stateroom he heard the cry, "Man overboard!" He knew he could not help if he went on deck, so he took his lamp, and held it close to his little round "bull's-eye" window. Soon he heard the glad cry, "Saved!" and the next morning he learned that it was his light that accomplished the rescue. It came just at the right time, it fell just in the right place, it showed the sailors where to cast the rope, and pointed out the rope to the drowning man.

Christ dwells with you, that you may find entrance for Him also into some other life.

How to Get a Fresh Start

A LITTLE girl, on New Year's morning, was watching her grandmother knit a stocking. "My knitting," said the wise old woman to the little girl, "is like the year that has just begun. See if you can guess how."

"I know!" said the girl at last. "It's because the year grows slowly, stitch by stitch."

"That's so," answered the grandmother; and then she suddenly pulled out her needles and unraveled the stocking, so that the yarn lay, a ruined, crumpled heap, in her lap.

"Oh, dear!" cried the little girl. "Why *did* you do that?"

"To teach you, darling, that though your life grows slowly, you can spoil it all in a minute."

Grandmother's lesson was a strong one, and yet it was only half true; for, as Mrs. Sangster sings:

"The noblest thing a year can lay
In the lap of you and me,
The brave young year has brought this day;
It is Opportunity."

A fresh start, a chance to do better, an invitation to pick up the needles and knit the stocking back again to where it was before—that is the blessed gift of every new year; and, for that matter, of every new day and hour. Praise God for the encouragement of time!

Paul's comparison is such a comfort: we can

How to Get a Fresh Start

“put off the old man,” we can “put on the new man,” we can be “renewed in the spirit.”

There is something so complete in the taking off of a garment. There it lies on the chair, entirely apart from us ; we have absolutely nothing more to do with it. If it were like getting rid by medicine of a blotch on the skin, which disappears gradually, some days even going back to its former humiliating prominence, it would be discouraging enough. But it is like shuffling off the skin, as a snake does, and finding a soft, fair, new skin underneath.

Is Paul right? Can we get rid of our evil natures as easily as that? Can we assume the good, the true, the beautiful as easily as that?

Yes, Paul was right, of course. “I will ; be thou clean”—Christ is still saying that ; and as He says it, in answer to man’s faith-filled entreaty, the horrible leprosy of sin falls away like a defiled garment, and the angels stand ready with the best robe to put it on us.

Get Christ in your heart ! It is no more a slow process than for Christ to enter your front door.

Get Christ in your heart ! There will be no room for evil there. His presence is transformation.

Get Christ in your heart ! He comes for the asking. An instant’s sincere asking is enough.

As to coats of cloth, the old must be taken off before the new is put on. As to the robe of Christ’s righteousness, we must boldly put it on *over* our filthy rags, and it will transform them to fine, white linen.

We all need the new start ; oh, how we need it ! For the new start is—Christ.

Bringing Others to Christ

YOU are not too *young* to bring others to Christ. A missionary in India was sent for, to go into an obscure village and baptize seventy adult native converts. He was examining the candidates when he saw in the corner a lad of fifteen, and questioned him. When he learned that he, too, wanted to join the church, the missionary urged him to wait till he was older, and confirmed in the faith. At once all the people sprang up and cried, "Why, sir, he is the one who taught us all we know about Christ!"

You are not too *insignificant* to bring others to Christ. A torchlight procession started with dark torches, which sprung into brilliance like magic as they passed a certain point. Going close, a small child was seen there, sheltered, smiling, with a lighted candle in his hand! You can be like that child.

You are not too *ignorant* to bring others to Christ. Rev. J. Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China, illustrates this truth with a candle. When do you expect it to give out light? When it is half burned down? No; as soon as you light it. The demoniac whom Christ healed wanted to remain with Christ, to learn from Him; but Christ sent him away, to preach the gospel in ten cities.

Begin with the person next you. A man was once praying for an unconverted neighbor: "Touch him with Thy finger, Lord!" Sud-

Bringing Others to Christ

denly the thought came, "Am not *I* God's finger?" He spoke to his neighbor, and won a soul for Christ. Spurgeon had the spirit of Andrew and Philip. One day a lad was showing him to a church where he was to preach. He asked the boy, in his great-hearted way, "Do you love my Master?" The boy stopped and said, "Mr. Spurgeon, for years I have shown ministers to the church, and not one has ever asked me that question." The result was a new life for Christ.

Don't wait for others to ask you to bring them to Christ. An experienced bathing master says he has seen many men overcome in the water, and all go down without a sound or an outcry. It is the same with drowning souls. Christ would never have had that talk with the woman at Sychar if He had waited for her to begin it.

Sometimes your victories will be in unexpected places. There is a remarkable collection of gold nuggets whose chief trophy is one worth \$985. It is so enormous that when it was discovered it was at first tossed aside without a suspicion that it could be gold. You may make just such a spiritual discovery.

And, finally, *expect* to win souls. A minister once came to Spurgeon and said dolefully, "I have been preaching for so many years, and hardly any have been converted."

"Why, man alive!" exclaimed the great preacher, "you didn't expect that every time you preached a sermon somebody would be converted, did you?"

"No, of course I didn't expect that."

"Well, that's why they weren't converted."

Leaning on the Lord

FEW soldiers, even among those that have seen the fiercest campaigning, have faced horrible deaths so often and so unflinchingly as the missionary, John G. Paton. The secret of his courage is his unflinching trust in God. "I never could say," Paton declares, "that on such occasions I was entirely without fear. Still, I was never left without hearing that promise in all its consoling and supporting power coming up through the darkness and the anguish, 'Lo, I am with you alway.'"

George Macdonald truly says that "to be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved." This whole-hearted trust is the deepest honor we can pay Jehovah. God wants to trust us, and He knows that He cannot trust us unless we trust Him.

Spurgeon tells how he came to repose this trust in God. He was carrying on his Pastors' College, and was reduced to the last dollar for its support. In this emergency a lady, whose name he never even knew, sent him a thousand dollars to use in the work. The great preacher declared, "I threw myself then and thenceforth upon the bounteous care of the Lord."

Such a confidence in God may be gained by any one who will simply take God at His word. There is a helpful sentence in "Gold Dust": "As carefully as a mother arranges a room where her children will pass the day, does God

Leaning on the Lord

prepare each hour that opens before me." The realization of this, through constant experience, is one of the most exhilarating joys of life.

As a great ocean steamer nears a coast, the captain and helmsman need a minuteness of knowledge which they do not possess. Unknown dangers, hidden rocks and shoals, are all around them. So a pilot comes off from shore, climbs on board, and takes his place at the wheel. Instantly the control of the ship is transferred from ignorance to knowledge and from incompetency to ability.

Just such a transfer takes place in a life that is surrendered to the Infinite Pilot. He knows every sea, to the least shifting bar and the slightest wind that blows. He will bring us to the desired haven.

Our trust must be complete. The pilot must have supreme authority. Note what happens when you take a check to the bank. You go half way there. Do you then receive half the sum the check promises to pay? No; not a cent is yours till you go all the way, and put in your check at the teller's window. So it must be with those "checks on the bank of faith," the promises of God. Let us believe, with Frances Power Cobbe:

"In His hands we are safe. We falter on
Through storm and mire;
Above, beside, around us, there is One
Will never tire.

"What though we fall, and bruised and wounded lie,
Our lips in dust?
God's arms shall lift us up to victory!
In Him we trust."

Fault-Seeing and Fault-Finding

NEARLY all discoverers, from Columbus down, belong to nature's noblemen. They have the courage to press across unknown seas, over Arctic ice, or through the tropical jungle. They have patience for long searches among the innumerable stars to hit upon a new asteroid or comet, or among the rocks and flowers beneath their feet to hit upon a new plant or fossil. They have the persevering insight that pierces through complicated formulæ to some wonderful secret of chemistry or physics. Even the gold-hunter, in his wild-eyed, dogged hunt among the fastnesses of the mountains, has something grand about him.

But the fault-finders! those that go up and down the world peering into the lives of men, to spy out, not their nobility, but their meanness; not their beauty, but their ugliness! They are discoverers that rank with the pig, nosing amidst offal.

A man sees what he is prepared to see and expects to see. When an artist travels, he sees Titians; a missionary, he sees the slums and their possibilities; a miser, he sees the stock exchanges. So in your life journey; if you are a fault-finder, the world is full of faults for you to find, and you will find nothing else.

The most divine thing on earth,—what is it? It is a mother's love for her erring boy. It is

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the most divine because it is nearest Christ. She knows his faults, alas! too well; but she shuts her eyes to them, she tries to forget them, she believes in him in spite of them; and if anything will save a man it is that spirit, in mothers and in Christ.

Sometimes, too,—have you ever thought of it?—what we call a fault is part of the make-up of our friend, so intimately interwoven in his character that to remove it would be to destroy his identity for us. He is impetuous, yes; but that is a part of his warm-heartedness. He is quick-tempered, yes; but that goes with his honesty and frankness. The French phrase, “the defect of a quality,” expresses a truth that all fault-finders will do well to remember.

Some clever women can take an old dress, and by half a day's turning and cleaning can make it as good as new. Some clever men can take an old sofa, and with the aid of a few yards of cloth and some brass-headed nails, present to the household a brand new piece of furniture. And there are others, still more clever, that can make the best of people! They not only see their best, but they get others to see it, they bring it out in conversation, they develop it by their loving sunshine.

To be sure, we must pass judgment upon others, in a way. We must see their faults, or we cannot help them out of them. We must rightly estimate character, or we cannot live justly and prosperously.

But there's a difference between fault-seeing and fault-finding—oh, all the difference in the world!

Blessedness at Hand

SOME thinkers make a careful distinction between the words "blessedness" and "happiness." Happiness is the surface pleasure, blessedness is the inner delight; happiness flowers in time, blessedness is rooted in eternity; happiness is consistent with worldliness, blessedness exists only with religion.

Whether we agree with this distinction or not, it is certain that Christ's thought of joy is very different from the world's—and Christ knows! The man He counts blessed is the meek, the afflicted, the kind, the pure, the peaceable, the persecuted. The man the world counts happy is the aggressive, dominating, lucky, rich, and famous master of men and of things. They cannot both be right.

Once the Duchess of Argyle wrote to several European monarchs and asked them who it was they especially envied. Most of the replies were in harmony with that of Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria, who said, "I envy the fate of the man who is not an emperor." Not long ago William K. Vanderbilt, one of the richest men in the world, declared that he envied the man who had no wealth to care for. Yet it is to be observed that the emperor retains his crown, and Vanderbilt his millions.

It is the business of the Christian to be happy "in whatsoever state," in poverty or riches, in lofty station or obscurity. Canon Gore declares that in great measure it was the *cheerfulness* of

Blessedness at Hand

the early Christians that attracted and won those around them. This has been true of all Christians since.

Recognize yourself, Christian, as an advertisement of Christ! If you are sunny in the darkness, hopeful in trouble, and cheery in affliction, those around you will see the evidence that Christ is a Joy-Giver. But if you are anxious and depressed, they will be likely to seek their happiness elsewhere than in your self-discredited religion.

I like to think of the old Cunard captain whom Dr. Cuyler tells about. A passenger asked him, "Is it *always* foggy here on the banks of Newfoundland?"

"How should I know, madam?" was the answer; "I don't live here."

So says the Christian when men inquire petulantly of the fogs of life: "I don't live among them."

Indeed, a true Christian has appropriated to himself this bit of "Uncle Eben's" philosophy: "Minnit a man stops lookin' fer trouble, happiness 'll look fer him." He seeks a better country, that is, a heavenly. He has set his affections on things above.

No independence is so valuable as this independence in regard to the source of one's happiness. Colton wisely said: "To be obliged to beg one's daily happiness from others bespeaks a more lamentable poverty than that of one who begs his daily bread." No blessedness but that of character is thus independent of circumstances, no joy except that which is parallel with the eternal, unchanging, and stable joy of God.

Religion Through and Through

GOD commanded the Jews, at the Passover season : "Purge your houses of leaven. Let no leaven be found in them." The Jews obeyed very thoroughly. They swept every room. They searched the remotest corner. They lighted candles and peered into dark places. Then they made formal declaration before God : "I have done what I can to remove the leaven ; if there be any more in the house, I curse it, and disown it altogether."

Such a search for sin, uncompromising, determined, thorough, solemn, must the Christian make in his own heart ; and if any iniquitous tendencies unavoidably remain, he must disown them wholly and forever.

Religion must be a light to the room within, before it can shine out of the windows. As John Bunyan said, "Religion is the best armor in the world, but the worst cloak." It is made for disclosing and not for concealing, for attack and not for defense.

A writer in *The Sunday-School Times* shrewdly links together Rite, Right, and Wright. Religion is not a matter of Rite, but of Right—heart-righteousness. Nor merely of Right but Wright ; that is, not merely knowing the truth, but doing it, being a *wright* of it, a worker of it.

"What I want," said Kingsley, "is, not to possess religion, but to have a religion that pos-

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sesses me.” Beecher once declared that many people make religion the cake of life—something to be put away in a cupboard and used only when company comes. But religion must be the bread of life.

The foundation of real religion is to deal honestly with ourselves and with God. An English photographer once hung out a sign, “It is not necessary to be rich to look rich in one of our photographs.” He kept a studio full of clothes *à la mode*, paste jewels, and other trappings of folly. He darkened eyebrows and eyes and removed wrinkles by a touch.

Not such is God’s photography. God sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outer appearance, but God looks on the heart. Henry van Dyke’s famous rhyme is not always true of earth’s fame, but it applies to every record of heaven :

“Four things a man must learn to do
If he would make his record true :
To think without confusion clearly ;
To love his fellowmen sincerely ;
To act from honest motives purely ;
To trust in God and heaven securely.”

The great reward, if one shows before men only what he really is, is that he always has more and more to show. T. T. Lynch makes a wise remark : “He who persists in genuineness will increase in adequacy.”

And, on the other hand, nothing so belittles a man as the habit of hypocrisy. What actor has been a man of leadership and of power outside of the theatre? Wear a mask, and before long—the mask will be *empty* !

Prodigals—and Fathers

THERE is no such thing as a little sin. In Moscow once a young man stole some gold fish, hiding them in a tank under the floor of his room. From that very room, and, as it was afterward proved, from that very tank of decaying fish, sprung a fearful plague, which desolated the city and country, and left the young man himself a blind and suffering cripple. There is no little sin, and if you sin at all you are a prodigal son, and the parable applies to you.

For sinning is departure from the Father's house. Every sinner lives in a far country. Every one who spends his substance, his money, time, or talents, in ways which God would not approve, spends it in "riotous living." He feeds swine; for the world, on which he spends his money, has no more care for him than pigs for the one who supplies their wants. And there is always "a famine in that land," a famine of peace, of true happiness, of power, of soul food.

"Repentance," says Dr. Conwell, "is the greatest deed that can be done on earth."

"What is repentance?" asked a Sunday-school superintendent; and a little girl wisely answered, "It is being sorry enough to quit." Not being sorry, but being sorry enough to quit.

It cannot come too soon, if you are sinning. Said old Thomas Fuller, "You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late." Another good reason is given by

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Mason: "If we put off repentance another day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in."

So it comes about that repentance may be put off so long that it is impossible. God will not make puppets of us. He will not force repentance upon any man. He is always ready to forgive, but men may so harden their hearts that they can no longer desire forgiveness.

Whenever forgiveness is honestly asked, however, we may be sure God quickly and freely grants it. Henry II. was besieging his rebellious son, when the prince sent for his father. He was sick and wanted to confess his wrong-doing, but the king sternly refused to go to him. "Take me from my bed," cried the dying prince, "and let me die in sackcloth and ashes in sorrow for my sin against my father." When the king heard of this, too late, he moaned, "Would God I had died for him!"

This could never happen with God. Like the father in the lovely parable, He sees the returning prodigal while he is a great way off, runs, falls on his neck, and kisses him. Like the shepherd in another parable still more forcible, He leaves the ninety and nine safe sheep, and wanders in the dark over crag and marshland, till He has found the sheep that was lost.

"Lord, do thus much for me and all ;
And, when we stray
From Thy good way,
Oh, fetch us home at evenfall !"

Some Sycomore Fruits

ZACCHÆUS turned his defect into his advantage. A little man, he climbed the tree and so became taller than any six-footer in the crowd. We may all do the same. "If your sword is short, add a step thereto." If your intellect is dull, study harder. If spiritual graces are difficult for you to attain, pray the more zealously.

Zacchæus did not hesitate on the score of dignity. He did not wait for a chance to look down from some house-top or stone wall. He wanted to see Jesus, and there was a sycomore tree handy, so up he went. It is that kind of man still that sees Jesus, the man that uses the first available means to come close to him—a revival, a private conversation, a book, a prayer, a Salvation Army meeting.

Zacchæus was not obliged to speak to Christ; the Saviour spoke to him. Zacchæus never dreamed of inviting Jesus to his house; Jesus invited Himself. No man needs to take the first step toward Christ, for our Lord has taken many steps toward us, has gone more than half-way to meet us.

Zacchæus was not worrying about men's opinion of him, though they sneered, "Jesus is dining with a sinner!" He cared a great deal, however, about Christ's opinion of him. It is Christ's opinion of us that all men and angels will hold in the end.

Zacchæus received Christ joyfully. We may

Some Sycomore Fruits

be sure the best cloth was laid, the best dishes were set out, with the best food upon them. It would cost something. Indeed, it cost more than half of all his goods before he was through with it. It always costs to receive Christ. It costs; but oh, how royally it pays!

Zacchæus did not take Jesus into a side room and whisper his confession into the Master's ear. He stood up boldly, and proclaimed it before the room full, and the windows and doors full. When one really is ready to confess his sins before Almighty God, it is easy to confess them before petty men. It may not be best or required, but it is easy.

Zacchæus knew it was not enough to just say he was sorry. He showed heart repentance by purse repentance. He brought forth fruit meet for repentance. Indeed, he did not say he was sorry at all—in words; but he made a good confession just the same.

Zacchæus probably did not think that even half his goods to the poor and a fourfold restitution could catch up with his wrong-doing. You never can catch up with wrong-doing—with broken hearts, with ruined lives. But he did the best he could, and Christ always accepts that.

Zacchæus got for his reward just one word: "Saved!" But that word was spoken by the one being in the universe that could speak it with authority. And it meant an eternity of peace, of power, of purity, of bliss. Surely, with all his bargaining, Zacchæus had never before made a bargain comparable to that!

The Lad With the Lunch

It is said that once the great musical conductor, Sir Michael Costa, was leading a rehearsal. There was a multitude of players, and off in a far corner a man with a piccolo. Said the man to himself, "With all this tumult of organs and drums and trumpets and cymbals, it makes no difference what I do," so he stopped. Immediately Costa threw up his hands and ordered silence. "Where is the piccolo?" he cried.

Ah, the child may have only a small part to play in the great world-orchestra, but the Conductor has a quick ear. He misses the least note that should be in the music, and is not. May we not believe that the great miracle of the loaves and fishes would have been spoiled for the Master if that small boy had not cheerfully given up his meagre lunch?

But we must not be too sure that the child's part is small. Certainly it was not a small part in that miracle. When Hell Gate was blown up, and that formidable obstruction to New York's commerce was in an instant removed, that instant represented not only the work of hundreds of strong men for many months, but also the touch of a little child's finger upon an electric key. Not seldom is a child found at the electric focus of life, ready and able to set in motion forces infinitely stronger than itself is.

That is one reason why the right training of a child is such a great thing. A lovely story is told of a woman nearly a century old, who lay

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dying, and as she lay there she kept asking, "Is it dark?" "Yes, Janet, it is midnight." "Are all the children in?" Years ago her children, grown up, had preceded her to the spirit world, but she imagined them back again, and died with the question of motherhood upon her lips.

Ah, yes! "Are all the children in?" That is the question of questions; for if the children are brought into the fold, it will speedily be well with the whole round earth. As Jean Ingelow wrote:

"Far better in its place the lowliest bird
Should sing aright to Him the lowliest song,
Than that a seraph strayed should take the word
And sing His glory wrong."

Yet, after all, the lad with the loaves and fishes did a little thing; he only gave away (perhaps sold—who knows?) the lunch that his mother had given him and his father had earned; and he got it back again in a few minutes. The great thing was done by our Lord in taking the child's little deed and magnifying it to cover the needs of five thousand persons.

That is only a token—writ large for all ages to note it—of how Christ is always ready to magnify our small deeds of obedience and self-sacrifice. His are the Midas fingers that turn all our dross to gold. Through all his life that boy must have rejoiced: "It was *my* lunch the Master used that glorious day!" And he is rejoicing over it even now, I hope, in heaven.

How many such joys are we preparing for ourselves as the days go by?

Power and Prayer

THAT prayer means power in national affairs has been proved many times, but probably never more remarkably than in the case of Abraham Lincoln. It came out when the President visited General Sickles, as he lay wounded after the battle of Gettysburg.

“What were you thinking of while we were fighting up there?” Sickles asked.

“Oh, I wasn’t much concerned about you!” Lincoln replied; and then he went on to explain solemnly how at the height of the campaign, as he was wrestling with God on his knees for victory, there had come to him the sweet comfort that it was all to result favorably, as it did. The great President had the same assurance given him regarding Vicksburg, before that crucial battle was won.

Time and again, in the large affairs of missions, prayer has been proved to mean power. A classic instance is that crisis in the Telugu field of India when Dr. Clough was threatened by the indignant high castes with the loss of their support if he received into his mission school some low-caste applicants. Dr. Clough and his wife, praying over the matter in different rooms, were simultaneously led by God to open to 1 Cor. 1: 26-29, “God hath chosen the weak things of the world,” etc. They received the low castes, lost all their other scholars, and speedily came the greatest revival since Pentecost, and a church of 30,000 communicants.

Power and Prayer

That prayer means power in money affairs is abundantly proved by the experience of George Müller and his successor in the management of his great orphanages. He made vast plans, requiring an annual expenditure of \$230,000. He never went into debt. He had not a cent of assured income. And yet his orphans never went hungry to bed. He reckoned some 30,000 direct and wonderful answers to prayers received on the very day of his asking. He never made a request of man, but he received in this way of private prayer more than four million dollars to carry on his vast undertakings. William T. Stead considers George Müller's life to be a triumphant scientific proof of prayer.

Prayer means power in sickness. It is a famous story how Luther, visiting Melanchthon when the latter was to all appearances dying, prayed him back to life again by more than an hour of strong pleading with God. "Dear Luther, why don't you let me depart in peace?" cried the suffering Melanchthon. "We can't spare you yet, Philip," was his friend's reply; and Melanchthon, given back, as Luther firmly believed, in answer to his prayers, labored for years afterward in the cause of the Protestant Reformation. We are to use in sickness all the means that God gives us, such as medicine and surgery; but prayer is also a means, powerful and never to be omitted.

In short, let us never forget that, as Phillips Brooks so wisely said, "Prayer is not the conquering of God's reluctance, but the taking hold of God's willingness." That is why there is power in it—because there is all power in God, and all willingness to bestow upon man.

Trials and Triumphs

JOHN NEWTON once quaintly compared the trials we must bear during a year to a great bundle of sticks, far too heavy to carry. But God knows that, and gives them to us one at a time; only, there are many foolish persons that insist on carrying yesterday's stick over again with to-day's, and adding to-morrow's also to the load!

“ Only a day at a time ! There never may be a to-morrow :
Only a day at a time, and that we can live, we know ;
The trouble we cannot bear is only the trouble we borrow,
And the trials which never come are the ones which fret
us so.”

Many of our anticipated and dreaded trials, when we come up to them in God's time, prove not to be trials at all, but blessings. They are like a certain picture, which, from a distance, seems to be a skull, but as you draw nearer, you see that it is a throng of cherub faces. The Christian, knowing God's loving kindness, expects such transformations all the time.

Then, when the real trials come, the Christian knows that they are for the best, and this knowledge takes all the hardship out of them. It is like the monks' peas. Two monks were bidden, as penance, to make a long journey with their shoes and stockings full of peas. One soon became weary and sore, and hobbled painfully, while the other walked the whole way briskly and comfortably. When pressed for a reason for

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the difference, the shrewd monk said, "Why, before I started out, I boiled my peas." It is this trustful submission to God's will that in like manner softens the Christian's hardships.

Andrew Murray has a pleasant parable. He pictures a woman in South Africa whose husband has gone on a long and dangerous journey into the interior. One day a gigantic, ugly, black Kaffir stands in her doorway. She shrinks back in terror. But he hands out, smiling, a letter from the absent dear one, telling her that all is well with him. Then she feasts the Kaffir in her joy, and when he comes the next time, she rushes out eagerly to meet him. So it will be with all our blackest trials when we recognize them as messengers of our Lord.

But it is better even than that, for our Lord Himself will help us bear every trial. As Beecher says, "An unhelped cross is the heaviest thing a man ever carried; but a Christ-touched cross is about the lightest thing a man ever carried." "Take my yoke upon you," says the Saviour; but the yoke, we must never forget, is a contrivance by which two can draw a load together. Christ never asks us to bear a burden that He is not ready to share, and to carry the heavier end.

The trouble often is that we won't let Him help us. There is a tract called "Hannah's Faith" that tells of a poor woman with many sorrows, who was amazingly cheerful under them all. "You must take your troubles to the Lord," a visitor said one day. "I do more than that," answered Hannah; "*I leave them there.*" Most of us carry them away again.

Getting Ready for Heaven

IN the first place, we need to remember that heaven *is* our home, and not this earth. Those that are most familiar with the migratory birds declare that their sole business in the northern latitudes seems to be the rearing of a family. As soon as the young birds can fly, the parents turn their thoughts southward again, to the dear, warm, sunny home-land. Thus, to the Christian, earth seems only his nesting place, where he forms his character, and strengthens its wings for a flight to the better country beyond the cold and the storms.

Such thoughts of heaven as often come to the Christian fill his life with joyful anticipations. We are like the old woman in the poor-house, whom the minister found with a face quite radiant with delight. When asked the cause of her joy, she answered: "Oh, sir, I was just thinking what a change it will be from the poor-house to heaven!" It will, indeed, be a blessed change, and the thought may well fill us with rapture in the midst of earth's greatest trials.

It is well that only the outlines of heaven are shown us: the full reality would cause us to lose our hold on earth and its duties. A traveler relates how, on returning to France from India, the sailors of his ship became quite incapable of performing their tasks. They gazed longingly at the approaching shores, they put on their best clothes, some talked volubly, others wept. They

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had to obtain, according, indeed, to the custom of the port, another set of sailors to bring the ship to shore. So it would be with us, could we see more distinctly the enchanting shores of heaven!

But, none the less, we are very foolish if we do not get ready for heaven, if we forget it, if we do not in some way relate all our living to this great and permanent change that is sure to come. "Heaven," said Beecher, "to be a place of happiness, must be a place of activity." We can prepare for heaven, then, by accustoming ourselves to heavenly activities. And what are they?

First, friendships. Are the associations in which we most delight those with the meek, the holy, the loving, the faithful, whose is sure to be the Kingdom of Heaven? Then we are preparing ourselves for the companionships of heaven.

Next, ambitions. Are our hopes, our aims, our strivings, centred on wealth or luxury or worldly fame? These all pass away like a breath, even if we gain them. Only one ambition has issue in heaven, the ambition to win God's approval. That is the permanent riches, and ease, and fame.

Then, employments. We do not know just what we are to do in heaven, but we know that we may best prepare ourselves for our work there by doing the work here that God picks out for us—and no other work. And if, in humble dependence on God's leading, we do that work, He will bring us into the happy work of heaven.

The Light of the World

THE discovery of the X-ray has shown us how little we have known of that wonderful substance, the ether, and how little we yet know. When Christ is called the Light of the world, He is compared to one of the greatest wonders in the universe, a marvel that grows with every year more surprising, just as the world is continually seeing more and more of beauty and wisdom in the life of our Lord.

As the X-ray pierces through solid substances and discloses what is within, so that our flesh is transparent to it and only our bones cast a shadow, so Christ can pierce to the deep things of the heart, and everything is naked and open to His eye.

But light goes nowhere except to heal, and the X-ray, with its strange penetrative power, is proving itself a mighty curative agent, conquering lurking diseases that for all ages have baffled the physician. So also Christ, though He, the Word, is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the joints and marrow, yet He thrusts with healing and pierces with peace.

Light is everywhere. Water is nearly as common, but there are desert places where the earth is dry. Even there, however, probably there more brightly than elsewhere, falls the light. And it is thus with the Light of the world. There is no desert among men, however barren the soul and frightful in its desolation, but the

The Light of the World

beautiful Christ is there—rays as direct from the Sun of righteousness as any that fall on the saint.

Light is compound. It has all colors in it. It has heat rays to warm, and chemical rays to vivify. It has many other powers that we are only beginning to learn. We have translated only a stanza of its ode. And Christ also is manifold. The Deity a trinity!—what marvel that He is not a thousand trinities! Whatever the pure heart desires, it finds in Christ. And every desire fulfilled awakens us to a new longing, which also is satisfied, and so on endlessly. There is no *finis* to the romance of Christ.

Let the Light of the world illumine our hearts, and we shall not care whether it is dark or sunshiny without, nor whether it is wealth or poverty within. Let us look for that light, and not for the fitful gleam of fortune. Let us accustom our eyes to the glory of it, preparing for that realm where “the Lamb is the light thereof.” And let us all pray with the poet :

“Dark and perplexed the way,
Hard and involved the right ;
The smoke of passion clouds the day,—
O Christ, be Thou my Light !

“Incarnate truth Thou art,
Of life the source and might ;
Renew Thyself within my heart,
O Christ, my Life and Light !

“So in Thy willing strength
Abounding let me live ;
Then to Thy cloudless land at length
Abundant entrance give.”

Doing His Will

It was a little crossing-sweeper, cold and ragged. A gentleman came up and gave him some money and then said, "I hope, my boy, you love the Lord Jesus."

The boy smiled happily. "Indeed, I do, sir," he said.

"And how do you know that you do?" the man went on to ask.

The answer was a beautiful one: "Because I always do what He tells me."

Ah, that is the secret of discipleship! We are His friends, if we do whatsoever He commands us. We are not His friends but His enemies, no matter how loud are our protestations of friendship, if we merely do our own will and go our own way.

It is impossible to be too lowly in this obedience, too eager to please our Lord. The old-time slave became such by allowing his ear to be bored to his master's door-post. He thus became a part of his master's estate, to be done with as his master chose. That is the comparison which Paul gladly adopted; he was the "bond slave" of Jesus Christ. No valet; no gentleman servant; no private secretary; no minister and ambassador; no viceroy. He was just the humblest kind of slave.

Ah, has the awl passed through our pride, our self-will, our personal ambition? Have we given ourselves, all that we are and hope to be, in absolute surrender to Christ? Though the slavery

Doing His Will

hurt, though the blood flowed, though the pierced flesh shrank, have we yielded ourselves utterly to our rightful Lord ?

If we have, then and not till then have we entered into the loftiest happiness and honor of the universe, becoming one with the Lord of the universe. For is not He the Door ?

Does this seem to you mystical, unreal, this talk of union with Christ? It is, in its actual working out as millions of Christians are working it out, the most practical thing in the world.

It means that you will seek in every way to get intimations of Christ's will, that this mind may be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. It means, in other words, that you will pray and read the Bible constantly. What would you think of the obedience of a soldier that did not listen to the word of command? of a general that did not read the message of his commander-in-chief?

And then, as we obey the first bit of Christ's will that is disclosed to us, in that act we have a revelation of more of His will. As we obey that, we learn more, and so on endlessly. You have never heard an obedient Christian complaining that he could not find out just what Christ wanted him to do.

All sensible men admit the convincing force of the argument from experience. I make this positive and emphatic assertion, that every man among all the millions of Christians would tell you that all his happiness in life has come from doing the will of Christ, and all his misery from failing to do that will. Is this a testimony that you can afford to neglect ?

A Grist for Gratitude

EVERY one should know at least one natural science, for the help it will give him toward knowing God. Of course it is possible for an astronomer, for instance, to be an atheist, in spite of the famous saying, "An undevout astronomer is mad"; and yet, if one has in his heart the desire to know God, some knowledge of "the height of heaven," of the planetary and stellar wonderland, will grandly impress upon one the majesty of the Creator, and His power and wisdom.

What astronomy does for vast stretches of space, geology does for vast stretches of time, disclosing here also the infinite God; and what both of these do for the greatneses of the universe, chemistry and botany will do for its littlenesses, and will disclose in a drop of dew as surprising marvels of design as the firmament can exhibit.

God's works are to be seen also in the world of men. A knowledge of history will help one to know God quite as much as a knowledge of science. There is hardly a copy of a daily paper but gives evidence of God's overruling and directing providence. The progress of missions, more striking during the past year than ever before, is a continual testimony to our Father's goodness and power.

And God is to be seen and His works are to be recognized not only in the world without but in the world within. If you would be grateful to

A Grist for Gratitude

God, know yourself and your sin, and the punishment you merit; then note how the merciful Father has blessed you. Pray much, and experience God's wonderful works in answer to prayer. Enjoy the Bible, and find in every page a spiritual heaven more crowded with stars than the Milky Way.

The future also is a part of the wonderful works of God. Our thanksgiving will indeed fall far below its possibilities if it lives only in the past. The finest material for gratitude lies in the promises of God, even before they can be fulfilled in your experience; for you know they will be fulfilled. To the eye of faith every promise is as actual as an event or a substance.

Do not save your thanksgiving for the large things of life. If you are not grateful for your little blessings as they come along, you will not be grateful for the large blessings when they arrive. With God there is no large or small, nor should there be a large or small in our relations with God. That is, whatever God does for us is great, and deserves great praise. It is as vast a wonder for the Infinite to think of us in the matter of a grass-blade as of the Gulf Stream.

And finally, do not save your thanksgiving for the annual festival, or for any other one day. Establish a custom of gratitude. Get into the habit of praise. You have no idea how it will brighten your life, and invigorate your purposes, and fill your whole heart with the love of Him who "giveth us all things richly to enjoy."

Prayer That Obtains

I HAVE a new theory about prayer. You won't believe the theory, but it is true; and here is the way I argue :

My baby cannot talk ; she can only cry, and hold out her arms. She cannot tell me what she wants, and often she does not know. It is no small part of her mother's business to find out what she wants, and get it for her, if it will not hurt her.

Now I do not believe that any one, not even a mother, is kinder than God, who made mothers. I believe that God does not wait for us to ask Him for what we want, since often we have not the words ; nor even to know what we want, since often all we know is that we are not satisfied, or happy. I believe that God is always thinking, patiently thinking, *brooding* over our possible desires, that He may discover them, and fulfil them.

"I also believe that," you say, indignant that I have called this a new theory.

No, you do not. If you did, your whole life would be changed.

You would stop worrying, since worry is only an unrecognized fear that God has forgotten you.

You would stop envying and coveting, for you would know that God is devising the best for you, and nothing is better than the best.

You would cease to be impatient, sure that

Prayer That Obtains

God's eagerness will not permit a second's unnecessary postponement.

You would be more earnest, realizing how close a partner in your business God has made Himself.

Your life would move serenely, steadfastly, confidently, if you really believed that God was making your happiness His engrossing aim. Your life would be an unending, joyous prayer.

I do not mean that you should make a parade of prayer. I believe with the old lady who said, "There are some things fit to be done in religion that ain't fit exactly to be talked about; and prayer is one." But if you really pray, you can't keep it from talking. Your lips will sing it, and your eyes will shine it, and your whole being will radiate it forth.

Will you not make trial of it? Will you not press into its golden mysteries as zealously as miners have pressed into the Klondike? It will not be long before you will realize what Trench so nobly describes :

" Lord, what a change within us one short hour,
Spent in Thy presence, will prevail to make !
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take !
What parchèd ground refresh as with a shower !
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower ;
We rise, and all the distant and the near
Stand forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak ! we rise, how full of power
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong ;
That we are ever overborne with care ;
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee ? "

In the Far Country

WHAT *is* a prodigal son, any way? It is not one who goes into a far country merely, for our soldier boys across the Pacific are not prodigals. Nor does the foolish spending of money make him a prodigal, for he might do that at home. No; a prodigal is one who prefers a selfish life to a life of love.

Love is the home-land—self-denial and self-giving; and self-seeking is the far country. If men are dear to you and God is dear to you, go to the antipodes and you will be at home. If you are a great sponge, seeking only to tickle your palate or your passions, satisfy your avarice or your ambitions, you are in the far country, though you do not step beyond your front gate.

Alas for the drunken wretch, blear-eyed and heavy-hearted, lashing his passion with an ever more beastly licentiousness, a pauper in purse, in honor, and in hope! But alas, also, for the man whose brain may never have been fired by lust or liquor, whose nerves are cool and calculating, whose bank account is awe-inspiring, but he sneers at philanthropy, degrades friendship with policy, is feared by his children, and dreaded by his wife. The currents of both men set inward, the difference being that the second is an arctic current, the first a gulf stream.

It is the easiest thing in the world for people to get into the far country. To say nothing of the bent of their nature, all the bent of the world and the times is thitherward.

In the Far Country

“Prepare!” the world cries to us; and it means, “Get ready to throttle your competitor!”

“Plan large things!” cries the world; and it means, “Plan to get more than your neighbors!”

“Succeed!” shouts the world; and it means, “Find your life! Be sure not to lose it!”

A blind guide is the world, but it can lead straight to the far country.

“Mortify the flesh!” “Buffet the body!” “Be crucified with Christ!” That is the only way to escape the far country. Give, until you get an appetite for giving. Prefer others to yourself, until humility becomes your crown. Follow Christ, until to follow aught else in the world would seem an unutterable loss and desolation. This is the only insurance against the far country. Do not think to have both the riotous living and the father, or to compromise between the harlot and the home. You cannot serve God and mammon. Do not hope for anything, do not seek for anything, save the Father’s complete authority, the Father’s exhaustless love.

O for lives that will stay at home with the Father! The workshop is there, and the vineyard, but there are the full barns and the harvest home, the Father’s upholding and the Father’s praise.

“Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest
Home-keeping hearts are happiest,
For those that wander they know not where
Are full of trouble and full of care;
To stay at home is best.”

Go!

THE first two letters of "gospel" spell "go"! Christianity is the only possession that fills men with a passion for sharing it. The scientist does not of necessity become a teacher, nor the millionaire a philanthropist, nor the Samson a bearer of burdens; but the Christian does of necessity become a missionary. He is of the light, which cannot help radiating forth. He is of the heat, which by its very nature must send out warmth.

Be sure of this, that in proportion as you are careless whether men are Christian, you are not a Christian. Be sure of this, that in proportion as you are willing to go forth for Christ, Christ has really come to you.

There are so many errands on which Christians need to be sent! "Go," says Christ; "minister cheer to the gloomy, faith to the skeptic, sympathy to the sorrowing, and money to the poor. Go to the prisons, and sick rooms, and slums. Do not neglect the nurseries. Go into the highways and hedges, the frontiers, the dark continents. Ah, who will go on my errands?" asks the King.

And if it were the King of England, millions of men would leap to do his slightest bidding. A man counts himself forever ennobled whom he has sent on an errand. But there are peerage rolls in heaven, too, and the patent of nobility reads, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren."

The great present need of the Christian church

Go !

is to rise to Christ's thought of the kingdom of heaven. Your church is a principality, held in fief. Let us not cheat in the taxes. Say : "Lord, here is my money." Nor shrink from military service. Say : "Lord, here are my abilities, my time, my self. Do you need an envoy, a soldier, a sacrifice? Send me!"

But such words will be a mockery if we are not willing to give at least a tenth of our income and a seventh of our time ; if we are not willing to let our business suffer, if need be, that the King's business may be promoted ; if we are not willing to let many pleasant things go, in order that this supreme joy, the Kingdom, may come.

Christians, in general, are not doing this. They are not saying, "Send me!" but "Send the other fellow!" They are not saying, "Take my money," but they are singing what they would do "were the whole realm of nature" theirs. No wonder that Jessup, the missionary, parodied "Tell it out among the heathen" thus :

"Tell it *not* among the heathen, that the ship is on a reef ;
It was freighted with salvation—our 'Captain,' Lord and
Chief.

But the tide at length receded, and left it high and dry—
The tide of gold and silver, the gifts of low and high.
The eagles and the dollars, the nickels and the dimes,
Flowed off in other channels, from the hardness of the
times."

I believe that a better, a truer time is coming. Let us not delay that time by our sluggishness, or indifference, or procrastination. Let us pray, with our brains, our pocket-books, our time, and our energies, "Thy kingdom come."

When We Have Repented

A GREAT deal of so-called penitence is being sorry for the pain. Not a little of so-called letting go of sin is coupled with the intention of keeping as close to it as one may with safety. Much of so-called confession is merely a statement of extenuating circumstances. Oh, how we palter with sin, as if it were an indigestion, to be cured with a pill, and not a poison, gnawing and fatal!

Test your repentance by your hatred of the sin. Does your whole being loathe it? Do you want to get as far from it as possible? Do you utterly renounce all the associations connected with it and leading up to it? If you were all alone in the world, and there were no hereafter and no God, would you still be at enmity with the sin? Then you have truly repented.

And those who are thus hating their sin and struggling against it, even though they may fall under the temptation daily, have no right but to believe that God is forgiving them daily. A sinner may do many bad things, but, for himself, the worst of all is to give up himself. If you honestly hate your sin, though you sin a thousand times more, never dare surrender hope for yourself, for that is to deny God's promises and to slander God's character.

Yes, for He who is to accept our repentance will help us to repent. No lamb can in his own strength shake the wolf from his throat. Christ is the Good Shepherd; His "rod and staff" will

When We Have Repented

beat the wolf away. No man can tear from his own body a cancerous growth. Christ is the Good Physician, with the merciful surgeon's knife. Much of our struggle with sin is as if men should try with their puny hands to squeeze the water out of all the mud in the world ; but Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, can make it firm, sweet land by a few hours' shining. With Christ we are *more* than conquerors. Where sin abounds, grace *much more* abounds. It is no stingy, doled-out aid ; it is ample, eager, superabundant.

This truth is hard to believe. A man who had done much evil, but had bitterly repented, came to stand before God.

"O God," said he, "trusting in Christ, I bring before you my many sins. I have been miserly, and ——"

"Enough ; I know them all."

"I have been cruel to my wife——"

"Angels, prepare his heavenly abiding place."

"I have coupled Thy name with fearful oaths."

"Bring hither, angels, a golden harp."

"I have boasted of the name of infidel."

"Angels, give him the stone with the new name written."

"I have befouled my garments in the mire of every sin."

"Put on him the wedding garment, white and glistening."

"I have thrown my pearls to swine, and then begged for the husks they ate."

"Enter, through the gates of pearl, into the heavenly city."

Thus marvelous, thus exuberant, is God's forgiveness of a repentant sinner.

Bible Failures

THE Bible paints many pictures of men that failed, and we may learn many lessons from their lives.

From Cain we may learn how jealousy leads to failure. One of the most important factors of success, either worldly or spiritual, is the ability to rejoice heartily in the successes of others, and learn from them.

Samson teaches us what deplorable failure comes from living for one's lower nature and neglecting the higher. With his superb physical nature he failed to cultivate his soul, and so he came to grief also physically.

From Eli we learn how closely our failure or success is interwoven with the failure or success of all those for whom God has made us responsible. Eli failed because his sons failed, largely through his fault.

Saul's failure was caused by self-will. He was eager to succeed, but in his own way and not in God's way; and that attitude always means failure.

The Bible gives many other instances of failure.

There was Absalom, his father's joy, sure of the throne, who lost both it and his life by his self-seeking ambition.

There were Ahab and Jezebel, whose lives were tragic failures because of their selfishness and cruelty; and Belshazzar, who lost his kingdom through intemperance; and Herod and Pilate, pilloried forever because they knew the right and

Bible Failures

were too weak to do it ; and Judas, most lamentable failure of all the ages, who fell through covetousness, which is idolatry.

The Bible is a terrible book, its pages are so filled with these mercilessly frank pictures of sin and disaster, these fearful warnings held up before each one of us.

But it is also the most exhilarating and comforting of books, and very largely because its heroes, men and women, are almost all of them men and women who failed as the world counts failure, but in spite of that, and often because of that, achieved the most splendid and permanent success.

Such was Moses, who died on the very border of the promised land, without seeing a single tangible result of his life work ; but all Christendom reveres him as the greatest man of human history, the founder of his nation and of the world's law.

Such were Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and nearly all of Israel's prophets, men without honor in their own countries, preachers of despised truths, lovers of sad lives ; but their writings are the backbone of the world to-day.

Such were John the Baptist, Stephen and James, the proto-martyrs. Such was Paul, imprisoned, beaten, stoned, beheaded. Such was our Lord Himself, a crucified convict. Oh, who would not deem it an eternal crown to be in such company ?

For success is to be like Christ, and to do His blessed will.

And failure is to be unlike Christ, and to disobey Him.

And there is no other failure, and there is no other success.

All We Need to Know about the Future

SIR WALTER RALEIGH, the night before he died, wrote these lines, which were engraved on his tombstone :

“ But from the earth, this grave, this dust,
The Lord will raise me up, I trust.”

This is true, so far as it goes ; but he might have gone much farther. For the Christian need not trust, he should know. Immortality should not be to him a faith, but an experience.

Before Christ came, men could only guess it. They could only rejoice in such “ Intimations of Immortality ” as Wordsworth recounts in his famous ode. Ingalls, the Western statesman, once described in a powerful address the responses to desires and instincts throughout nature. The young bird starts from the icy north for some region it never saw but feels moved to reach, and finds the sunny south. The fish of the tropic gulfs have a mysterious longing that leads them northward to cool spawning grounds. Nowhere in nature is there an unsatisfied longing, an instinct unmatched by reality. Shall the only exception be man, with this instinctive longing for immortality, planted in the breast of the lowest savage ?

Look at the old age of great men such as Gladstone. See how their souls reach out for larger things, never so vigorously. Every year is an advance in goodness and wisdom. Does not that imply that the soul is to go right on ?

All We Need to Know of the Future

But all these arguments seem needless, however strong, when we stand by the empty tomb of Jesus Christ, when we hear Him assure us, "As I live, ye shall live also. I am the resurrection and the life."

The fact that we are told little about this coming existence to satisfy our curiosity need not trouble us. As Helen Hunt Jackson sung :

" I hold that if it be
Less than enough to any soul to know
Itself immortal, immortality
In all its boundless spaces will not find
A place designed
So small, so low,
That to a fitting home such soul can go."

Fuller stood at a smith's forge and saw him put into the fire a piece of cold, rusty iron, which he afterward removed, bright and sparkling. "And thus," said he, "it is with our bodies: they are laid down in the grave, dead, heavy, earthly; but at that general conflagration, this dead, heavy, earthly body shall arise living, light-some, glorious." This is about all that is revealed to us.

But it is enough. We know that we are to be like Him, "for we shall see Him as He is." We are to have new powers for new work and new enjoyment, powers so far above our present understanding that they could not be disclosed to us.

How happily and proudly we should live, in view of this splendid destiny! How faithful to our Lord Christ, who alone has won it for us! Let us say over and over to ourselves as we go about our task, "I am to live forever; let me live well to-day."

Obeying When It is Hard

AN old sailor was talking with a young apprentice. Said he: "Aboard a man-o'-war, my lad, there's only two things—one's duty, t'other's mutiny."

No less strict and absolute are our relations with our Captain. The discipline of the Kingdom of Heaven is military. Christ says "Come," and we are to come; "Go," and we are to go.

The Duke of Wellington had issued a certain order to an officer, who tried to show the duke that it could not be carried out. "Sir," said Wellington, "I did not ask for your opinion; I gave you my orders." Christ is not so harsh, but He is equally authoritative; "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Obedience is the secret of the joy of heaven. Once a Sunday-school class were discussing the description of angels, "Ministers of His who do His pleasure," and the teacher asked how the angels obey God. "They do it directly," said one. "And well," said another. "And with all their hearts," said a third. But the fourth gave the best answer, for she added, "They do it without asking any questions."

And this same obedience, that is the secret of the joy of heaven, is the foundation of all the heavens on earth that have ever been established. A successful Christian worker, on his death-bed, was asked how it was that he had accomplished so much in his life. "The secret of my life," he answered, "is that I have said 'Yes' to Christ."

Obeying When It is Hard

Saying "Yes" to Christ will make any life happy and prosperous.

On the contrary, there are many who find this way of obedience too hard. Perhaps the average life is justly set forth in a stern inscription on an old slab in the cathedral of Lubeck, Germany :

" Thus speaketh Christ, our Lord, to us :
Ye call me Master, and obey me not ;
Ye call me Light, and see me not ;
Ye call me Way, and walk me not ;
Ye call me Life, and desire me not ;
Ye call me Wise, and follow me not ;
Ye call me Fair, and love me not ;
Ye call me Rich, and ask me not ;
Ye call me Eternal, and seek me not ;
Ye call me Gracious, and trust me not ;
Ye call me Noble, and serve me not ;
Ye call me Mighty, and honor me not ;
Ye call me Just, and fear me not ;
If I condemn you, blame me not."

Now the difficulty of obedience, instead of disheartening the Christian, should be his glory and his spur. It is Christ's testimony to our possibilities. He does not try us above what we are able to bear. He knows that fine steel cannot be made without fire, nor fine characters outside the furnace of affliction. He isolates us, that we may get strength in ourselves. He impoverishes us, that we may seek the true riches. He withdraws the praise of men, that we may seek the honor of God. And as the chemist is careful not to allow the furnace a fraction of a degree hotter than is necessary for the steel, so God renders no human life the least degree more difficult than is necessary for our character.

The Guiding Hand

WHEN Stanley was about to cross Africa for the first time, many of the strong men in his party burst into tears as they set out. They were not cowardly, but they were overcome by the thought of the terrific hardships which they knew lay before them.

Every human life is a journey as difficult and perilous ; and we might well shrink from it, had we no Guide. What absolute madness it is to set out alone !

I have read the story of a conceited young captain who would not wait off shore for a pilot to come on board, to take him through the narrows into the harbor. "I am my own pilot," was his proud reply to all remonstrances, and he promised to be in the harbor by daybreak. *He was*, —cast ashore, dead, amid the fragments of his wretched vessel. Such has been the fate of many a man who would be his own pilot amid the rocks and shoals of life.

When travelers climb dangerous places in the Alps, they are fastened to their guide. They have become a part of him. They may slip and fall, but he will not. His firmness, strength, and agility are theirs. So may we be bound to our omnipotent Guide ; and, thus united with wisdom and security, we may travel through life without a tremor of fear. Let us pray with Lucy Larcom :

The Guiding Hand

“Thou must lead me, and none other,
Truest Lover, Friend and Brother ;
Thou art my soul's shelter, whether
Stars gleam out or tempests gather ;
In Thy presence night is day ;
Show me Thy way !”

But there are conditions. As Dr. Mabie says, “The man who would have God's guidance must be willing to make spiritual things his main business.” When the pilot comes on board, even the captain is his subordinate. When you set out with an Alpine guide, you are under his orders, and not he under yours. Disobedience cuts the rope that binds you to your heavenly Guide, and back you fall into the crevasse.

This is why, with so much said about God's guidance in our lives, so few have practical experience of it. Few are willing to pay the price of it.

It is a happy price, but we do not understand that at first. It looks like dependence, but it is the only independence possible for us. It looks like bondage, but it is “the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

This is because more and more, as we go on in the pathway of obedience, we come into union with our Guide. It is not a rope linking us to Him, but He has entered our very lives. Where is the dependence, the bondage, when our Guide and Master has thus become a part of ourselves?

This is the great mystery of our religion, the mystery which Christ, the God-man, not only taught clearly, but gave in His own person the supreme illustration of it. We are to be one with Him, even as He was one with the Father.

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus !”

Hoops Around the World

PEACE is not always to be sought for. Christ came, He said, to bring a sword, to set brother at variance with brother, and children with fathers, that a man's foes should be they of his own household. And yet He is called, and rightly, the Prince of Peace.

For, as Ruskin says, "No peace was ever won by subterfuge or agreement; no peace is ever in store for any of us, but that which we shall win by victory over shame or sin." Richard Hovey has painted a terrible picture of that false peace in which no Christian will acquiesce:

"There is peace, you say—I believe you. Peace! Aye, we know it well—
Not the peace of the smile of God, but the peace of the leer of Hell.
Peace, that the rich may fatten and barter their souls for gain;
Peace, that the hungry may slay and rob the corpse of the slain;
Peace, that the heart of the people may rot with a vile gangrene.
What though the men are bloodless? What's a man to a machine?"

Doubtless, therefore, as Dean Stanley said, "there are times when controversy becomes a necessary evil. But let us remember that it is an evil." Let us remember that contests are only the rough stairway to a summit where we may all meet and clasp hands in view of a world that is whole, an unbroken horizon. In the midst of

Hoops Around the World

all our necessary contentions we are to look forward eagerly to the time when

“The days of war are past ; the Prince of peace
Doth sit betwixt the Hattin peaks of time,
While sounds across the earth the rhyme
Of love’s beatitudes.”

The remarkable relationship of blood that binds together, through the offspring of that wonderful Victoria, the thrones of England, Germany, and Russia, with many lesser realms, is only one object-lesson of human brotherhood and omen of universal peace. Rapidly we are coming to understand, even the most stupid of us, the kinship of mankind. Since the Congress of Vienna in 1815 there have been held twenty-seven great international congresses and conferences, discussing, and often finally settling, questions which in less happy days would surely have led to war. The greatest of these was the Hague Conference of 1899, establishing the Permanent International Court of Arbitration.

No reason but one accounts for this drawing together of the nations : we are drawing closer to God.

There was once a cooper who, when he discovered a quarrel among his neighbors, would say to them, “Brothers, we are springing apart ; come in and let’s put on another hoop.” Then he would get them to go to his lowly home, and pray over the matter, and thus he seldom failed to bind a new friendship.

Brothers, let us put new and strong hoops around the world !

Consecrated to One's Country

THE *con* in "consecration" means *wholly*. When we consecrate ourselves to our country we become wholly hers, our bodies, minds, and hearts, our time, money, ambitions, all at her service.

Does this conflict with the claims of religion?

We shall never reach the heart of true patriotism until we cease to think of our country in personal terms, and begin to identify it with men and women. The dear ones in your house, your neighbor with a sick child, your grocer whose bill you owe, yonder cabman out in the hot sun, these are your country. The street in front of your house, the choked-up gutter yonder, the new town hall, these also are your country. Carry the review outward over as many leagues as your country extends, but never forget that your country begins at home.

Now how can we consecrate ourselves—wholly devote ourselves—to this living, breathing, familiar, majestic country of ours?

First, our bodies. Every drunkard is a traitor, playing false to his country, defrauding it of the manhood, the money, the labor and upbuilding it has a right to expect from him. And in lesser or greater degree, every one who weakens his body is injuring his country. Firm muscles, steady nerves, good sleep and digestion, a long, health-filled life, these are notable parts of patriotism, as such citizens as Gladstone of England and Roosevelt of America abundantly illustrate.

Consecrated to One's Country

Second, our minds. There are many things the patriot should know: the history of his country, the character of officials and candidates, the forms of government, the ways of parties, the laws, the rights of citizens, relations to other lands. Patriotism without knowledge is like a banner without a staff, a flabby, flippant thing, carried off on any wind that blows. An ignorant man will be firing at his own capitol the shot he intends in its defence.

Third, our consciences. The *con* here means "with." Knowledge is not enough: we must *know with* God. Without a conscience, the stronger your body and the fuller your mind, the worse for you and your country. Conscience, when you know a man is evil, will lead you to vote against him, though he belong to your own party. Conscience will spur your courage to protest against iniquity. Conscience will lead you to stand alone, if need be, on God's side.

Poor Philip Nolan, in Hale's powerful story, is not the only "Man without a Country." One may be such a man without being condemned, as Nolan was, to a life at sea, with no hint of native land. The unfaithful citizen is a man without a country, he who is wrapped up in his own selfish interests and is heedless of the sorrows and joys of mankind. As Scott painted him in that famous portrait,

"The wretch concentrated all in self
Living, shall forfeit high renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

Religious Barrenness

A NEW ZEALAND girl, taken to England to be educated, there became a Christian. Soon after, she set out to return home. "Why not remain in England?" asked her friends. "You love this land; why tempt the unknown perils of those far-away islands?" "What!" cried the Christ-found girl, indignantly; "do you think, after I have found the Christian's joy, I could keep it from my dear father and mother? I would go if I had to swim there!"

Why did Christ, in His parable of the fig-tree, and later in His more severe miracle of the fig-tree, condemn religious barrenness so unsparingly? Because if a man is a Christian, he must of necessity bring forth much fruit. A Christian that is not making other Christians is as much a contradiction in terms as a fire that is not warming or a flame that is not lighting.

Sternly does Rudyard Kipling sing :

"One instant's toil to Thee denied
Stands all eternity's offence."

There is no more deadly peril for a Christian than to be content with merely not doing wrong. Do not dare to live on the negative side of the Ten Commandments. "Six days *shalt* thou labor." Glasgow is supplied with water by hidden pipes running far up among the hills to a lovely lake. There is the health, the fulness; down below, the need. Is it a light matter if a Christian allows

Religious Barrenness

the conduit of Christ's health, namely, his own life, to get clogged up?

The fruit may be very modest, hidden beneath humble leaves. It is fruit that Christ wants, and not parade of fruit. George Macdonald, in a noble sonnet, pictures a vast cathedral, with ministering priests busy at the altar in a gorgeous ceremonial. In a far corner a woman is sweeping. It is to her, and not to the great heads of the temple, that a quiet figure comes, saying softly, "Daughter, thou sweepest well my floor!"

Christ bears with us, for a time, as the vine-dresser bore with the fig-tree. He throws around us all fruitful influences. If ever a man is to bring forth fruit to God's glory, it will be in this earth where God has made it so easy.

There will come a day when it will be too late. There will come a time when in anguish of soul we shall pray the last prayer of Helen Hunt Jackson :

"Father, I scarcely dare to pray,
So clear I see, now it is done,
That I have wasted half my day,
And left my work but just begun !

"In outskirts of Thy kingdom vast,
Father, the humblest spot give me ;
Set me the lowliest task Thou hast,
Let me, repentant, work for Thee !"

God grant that, when that sure time arrives, we may have lived a life (as Mrs. Jackson had indeed) full of Christlike ministries, brave battles for the right, endurance of hardness, and confidence in Jehovah.

Decide To-Day

A WORKMAN, a wicked man and an infidel, was at work one day in the dome of the Crystal Palace of London. Suddenly he heard a great voice saying solemnly, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." From that day the man was a Christian.

What was the great voice? It was Spurgeon's. The famous preacher, having to speak in the Crystal Palace, feared that he could not fill the vast area, and so came to test his voice, using only those words that the workman overheard.

Spurgeon's voice was wonderful, but there is a greater. "To-day, if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts." God speaks through the lips of His preachers, like Spurgeon; through all Christians; through good books; through sacred music and art; through the beautiful world He has made; through the voice of conscience. And all these voices urge: "Decide for God! Decide to-day! It will soon be too late!"

There must be a choice. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Says Robert E. Speer: "We must choose between the evil love of the world and the overflowing love of God." Moses made the choice when he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." It was the choice of the desert, but it made him the greatest man of all history. "Put the two side by side,"

Decide To-Day

says Webb-Peploe, "the things of the world in one scale-pan and the things of God in the other, and see which kicks the beam." The choice of God is always a fortunate one.

If you doubt this, if you think that you will not be prosperous or successful if you turn from worldliness to Christ, remember the story of Elizabeth and the merchant to whom the queen gave an important commission. The merchant objected. "What will become of my regular business if I undertake this?" "You attend to my business," said the majestic monarch, "and I will take charge of your affairs." That will be your good fortune if you surrender to God: the King of kings will take charge of your affairs.

But the yielding must come to-day. No other day is safe. There is an ancient tale of a king who hung a lamp in his palace and sent forth heralds to bring before him every criminal and rebel. If they came before the lamp went out, he would pardon them. If they delayed and arrived too late, he put them to a terrible death.

So it is with our Judge. So it must be and should be. It is wise that there should be a limit even to divine patience and mercy. If we had all time to repent in, we should find no time for repentance. Even on earth we recognize a parent's wisdom in requiring instant obedience; nothing less than that is kindness to the child. And we may be sure that our Father in heaven is as wise as the earthly fathers He has made.

A Castaway

THE most pathetic sight on earth, I think, is the sight of those poor old women that, on a cold Winter's morning, will shiver along the city streets poking among the ash-barrels for chance bits of castaway utilities. They themselves are castaways, often made so by their own sin.

It is easy to undervalue castaways. Those poor old women could tell you astonishing stories of the actual worth of what the rich toss into their ash-barrels. That city missionary yonder, groping cheerfully in the great human ash-barrel of society, could tell you many a hopeful story of jewels found among the cinders. John B. Gough was a castaway.

I used to sift the "clinkers" from my ashes and burn them over again, and I got many a hot fire out of a cold ash-barrel. Soon I found, however, that my time and clothes, or another man's wages, cost more than the coal I saved, so now the "clinkers" go with the ashes to fill municipal hollows.

Too many look in this way at the work of human rescue, and question whether the life expended is not worth more than the life saved. They forget that in this kind of toil the laborer is purified and strengthened, not soiled and weakened. No one that has tasted the ennobling delights of saving the men for whom Christ died will ever resign that hallowed occupation.

But what are we to say of those who, so far

A Castaway

from willingness to redeem the castaway, will not even, for his sake, resign a paltry pleasure? It has been well said that the perpetuation of the drink traffic is due to the moderate drinker. President John Henry Barrows temperately asks such a man: "Is it becoming in you, as one well disposed toward your fellows, to continue a habit which strengthens the drinking customs of society, and thus indirectly binds the fetters of drunkenness on weaker men?" And Dr. Barrows adds: "I know a rich man in Providence whose only son had been brought home to him intoxicated, and he reproached him, saying: 'I have done everything for you.' 'Yes,' said the son, 'and you taught me to drink wine.' And he struck his father to the earth."

And further, no moderate drinker is himself out of danger. It is from his ranks alone, and constantly, that the terrible, sad hosts of drunkards is made up; and every man of them was sure he could stop when he wanted to. Oh, young man, heed what was said by that brilliant, kind-hearted, poet-souled drunkard, Charles Lamb, who once wrote:

"Could the youth, to whom the flavor of his first wine is delicious as the opening scenes of life or the entering upon some newly-discovered paradise, be made to understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will, could he feel the body of the death out of which I cry hourly with feebler and feebler outcry to be delivered, it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth in all the pride of its mantling temptation."

What I Owe to Christ

THE most artistic of all toys is the kaleidoscope. It never repeats itself. Turn it as often as you will, it ever discovers new combinations of beauty.

Such is the character of Christ before the eyes of a loving disciple. Contemplation of it never becomes wearisome or profitless; nay, the longer we gaze, the loftier becomes our enjoyment, and our wonder the more profound. Now He is shepherd, now physician; to-day the light, to-morrow the vine or the bread; at one time the word, at another time the teacher; judge, guide, brother, friend, consoler, saviour, admonisher, prophet, priest, king, the fulness of the divine majesty—there is no completion of His excellencies, but every desire finds in Him a fresh gratification and every need a new supply.

A Christian young Indian once prayed this prayer: "I hear Thou sittest in light, but I have sat all my life among the darkneses. Good Chief, if Thou wilt lighten my darkness, send down Thy Spirit into my heart, that He may lead to where I may rest. I ask this *because Thou art Jesus Christ.*"

That is the Christian argument—just because Christ is what He is. It is argument for our faith; we can trust Him. It is argument for our peace; He dwells within us. It is argument for our immortality; He has pledged His own eternal life for ours. It is argument for our prayers; He has promised to answer. It is argument for our

What I Owe to Christ

good cheer ; he is with us. It is argument for our purity ; He cleanses us. It is argument for our power ; we can do all things, for He strengthens us.

What we owe to Christ is—Christ ; not His miracles, not His words, even, but that matchless personality which, by His deeds, His sayings, His death, His life in countless disciples since, and most of all by the loving influence of His present Spirit, He is pressing upon us.

If you would gain the inestimable blessings which these nineteen Christian centuries have found in Christ, you must gain them, not by logic, but by life. Satisfy your reason, by all means, if Christian evidences are not familiar to you : but do not expect the proving of Christ to do what only the loving of Christ can accomplish. Realize His presence. The gracious, masterful personality disclosed in the Bible—think Him into your daily living. Talk with Him. Bring Him your griefs, your joys. Obey Him. Ask great things from Him. And finally, as you gain Him for yourself, seal the mystic union by doing as He did, by giving Christ, and yourself with Christ, to others. Heed Sir Edwin Arnold's precept, and make your life one song of the Redeemer :

“ The sovereign voice spoke once more in mine ear :
‘ Sing now a song unstained by any tear ! ’
‘ What shall I sing ? ’ I ask ; the voice replied,
‘ Sing what we tell thee of the Crucified.’
‘ How shall I sing,’ I ask, ‘ who am not meet
One word of that sweet speaking to repeat ? ’
‘ It shall be given unto thee ! Do this thing,’
Answered the voice ; ‘ wash thy lips clean and sing.’ ”

Christ Our High Priest

IN one of Charles Wesley's noblest poems occurs the line, "God only knows the love of God." We are constantly forgetting the divine infinitude, and satisfying ourselves with petty representations of God; this is our way of breaking the second commandment.

There is this danger in reading the comparison of Christ to the Jewish high priest, given in the letter to the Hebrews, and we must constantly bear in mind that the comparison was written for a people to whom the high priest was the supreme earthly embodiment of their longings and hopes. He entered into their most mysterious shrine. He represented them before God Himself. He gathered into his own person, symbolically, all their festering sins, all their half-ashamed excellencies, all their pulsing desires, and laid them before God in His sacrifices, the sin to be burned up, the excellencies to be graciously received as a sweet-smelling savor, and the prayers to return to fulfillment.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews could use no more splendid symbol than this, if he was to use a symbol at all in presenting Christ to them. It compares Christ to a man, but then, Christ *was* a man. Christ also gathered up into His one life all human sins, excellencies, longings, and offered them before God. Nay, He was not only the high priest, but He became the sacrifice. Nay, He was not only the sacrifice, but He was the God who received the sacrifice and honored it.

Christ Our High Priest

We enter, in this comparison, the deepest and most precious theme of Christianity, the doctrine of the atonement. I am satisfied that mere argument never convinced a man of the truth of this doctrine. I myself have been led from flat denial of it into a recognition of it so fervent and grateful that I can scarcely think of it without tears ; and the perception of its truth has come to me through a struggle against my sins, absolutely helpless until Christ's help came, and through a longing for the removal of sin, absolutely hopeless were it not for the cross of Christ. I do not believe that any one who is not a convicted, repentant sinner can know the atonement as a vital truth.

This is not because the atonement is unreasonable, for it is the most reasonable of doctrines ; it is because the atonement meets a need, the most severe need of humanity, meeting it in the only possible way ; but we must experience the need before we can know the remedy.

Here is a profound medicine. The chemist can analyze it, the physician can state its curative properties, but only the sick man, through whose veins it has coursed in marvelous, health-restoring power, has any real comprehension of what that medicine is ; and how paltry, compared with his vital knowledge, is the physician's formula, the chemist's analysis !

“ Stronger His love than death or hell ;
Its riches are unsearchable :
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see ;
They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height.”

Do I Encourage Others?

NEXT to creating, making from the beginning, is the art of recreating, making over again. If you can take some one who is only half a man, all eaten with worries and worn with fears, and make him a whole man, restoring to him his courage and hope and good cheer, have you not done a God-like deed?

It is strange that so many are eager to lavish their time, strength, and genius on a block of marble or a square of canvas, when they might use flesh and blood for their statues, and human life for their paintings, and all eternity for their studio. It is strange that so much art should be lavished upon "still life," and withheld from the pulsing, hungry, responsive, immortal lives that crowd about us. What is "high art," anyway?

If encouragement is to put life into a man, discouragement is to put death into him. The word comes from the Latin *cor*, which means *heart*; to discourage a man is to take out of him the heart, the centre of life.

Men are twice men when they are praised. If employers understood this, they could easily diminish their number of laborers and increase their bank account. An athlete will perform feats before a hurraing crowd he could never perform in solitude. College boys know well enough that if they want their team to win they must shout for it.

A word of encouragement is always the most profitable of investments. Nothing else returns

Do I Encourage Others ?

so great dividends. Julian Legrand, the Paris merchant, never tired of telling how, in the panic of 1857, his firm was on the brink of certain failure for lack of \$100,000, which for two days he had tried in vain to raise. The crisis was at hand, when a stranger entered his office, and offered him the needed sum on his personal note without interest. Legrand had been member of a school committee years before, and, not praising merely the rich boys, had gone to a certain poor lad, commended him for his work in the examination, and told him he could do better if he tried. That had been the turning point of the poor boy's life, and now he had come to repay, in part, the debt he owed for that one word of encouragement.

If we could be sure of such a money return for our words of praise, encouragement would be as common as discouragement is now ! Why can we not remember that the coin of heaven is more enduring than the gold of earth, and that any good influence on an immortal soul enriches us infinitely more than would the bank balance of a Rothschild ?

It is a homely verse, this of John P. Trowbridge's, but it admirably sums up this homely theme :

“ How many smiles there could be
If folks would always say
' Good-morning, neighbor, let me give
A helping hand to-day !' ”

“ How many smiles there will be,
My friend, when you and I
Have learned to practise what we wish
These other folks would try ! ”

The Life of Faith

ABRAHAM'S great deed of faith gave him his title. Henceforth it was "faithful Abraham"; yes, and "Abraham, the father of the faithful," so true is it that faith, wherever shown, gives rise to faith in others. Be sure that whatever act of faith you perform will become at once a conspicuous feature of your life, will color your character, will create your fame. If you want to be known, well, far, and long, there is no better, no quicker way than to do a deed of faith.

Faith is leaving the ignoble seen for the noble unseen. Faith is a leap in the outer dark, in obedience to the inner light. Faith is willingness to sacrifice the lesser present for the greater future. Faith is the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, of God over gold, of heaven over earth.

Faith always means a giving up. Abraham gave up home and friends and secure possessions, for faith in God and Canaan. Livingstone gave up ease and safety and native land and life itself for faith in the African. William of Orange gave up his all for faith in freedom.

But faith always gives back far more than it demands. It gave Abraham new wealth and the Jewish nation, it gave William of Orange the grateful honor of an enfranchised people, it gave Livingstone the undying love of the Dark Continent, it gave all three the priceless approval of God.

"I know whom I have believed," shouted Paul when the world assailed him. "When

The Life of Faith

Martin Luther," says Dr. Cuyler, "was struck with sudden tempests he used to sing the Forty-sixth Psalm above the roar of the winds; his anchor never dragged." The highest faith lays hold of the loftiest personality, and faith in one's self, in the laws of nature, in the destiny of nations, or even in the love of friends, is as nothing compared with faith in God.

There is only one way to confirm and quicken this faith, and that is to live with God, to set one's affections on things above. It is fabled that the moon, in an eclipse, complained that the sun was not shining on her as usual. "I am shining as I always do," answered the sun, "but don't you see that the earth has got between us?" So it is when our faith grows dim and the Sun of our soul is obscured; always the world has come in between.

But faith, we must never forget, is not sight. Our vision of God, at best, is dimmed by earth's atmosphere, by the dark facts of sorrow, sin, and death. Phillips Brooks said once that very often, when men pray for more faith, what they really want is not more faith but more sight. We want God to show us the happy outcome of our present griefs; but God wants us to bear them, trusting in Him, without the knowledge of future compensations. We want God to show us the use of the disagreeable task He has set us; but God wants us to do it because we love Him and confide in Him, without seeing the results or knowing that any results will come.

Let us thank God for the darkness, which persuades us to clasp His hand!

Standing Alone for Christ

STANDING alone! It is not an easy thing. It calls for all the manhood in us. If we do it for God, it makes men of us.

Dr. P. S. Henson, in a lecture on "Backbone," once gave some stirring instances: "It is one thing," he said, "to touch elbows; it is one thing to feel the inspiration of fellowship as you stand awaiting the charge—but to stand alone, as Noah stood in the midst of a surging sea, in the midst of a mocking multitude; to stand as Abraham stood beside the altar on which his only beloved son was stretched, and lifted the gleaming knife while his heart was in his throat, and yet obey God; to stand as Moses stood in the presence of the king, with the proud consciousness that he was God's ambassador; to stand as Elijah stood in the presence of the wicked Ahab; to stand as those young Hebrews stood in the vast multitude who debased their manhood before the image that the king set up—three that stood erect in their God-given manhood; to stand as Nehemiah stood when he proudly said, 'Shall such a man as I flee?'; to kneel as Daniel did, though the lions were snarling yonder in their den; to stand as John the Baptist stood in the presence of guilty Herod; to stand as Paul stood, reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment, till he made Felix tremble on his throne; to stand as Savonarola stood in the presence of the guilty duke; to stand as Martin Luther stood in the Diet of Worms; to stand as Columbus stood in the midst

Standing Alone for Christ

of a mutinous crew with his eyes searching for the world that lay beyond,"—ah, this standing alone is heroic work ; it needs heroes, and it makes them.

But, after all, no man is alone who stands for God. David did not face Goliath alone. The mountains were full of chariots and horses round about Elisha. Christ could at any time summon twelve legions of angels. Paul always felt himself encompassed about with a great crowd of witnesses.

The best way, then, to get courage to stand alone before men is to spend much time alone with God. As we come to realize His presence always with us, we care less and less whether human forces are with us or not.

But God's presence with us is not enough. There is a phrase often heard in the prayers of old-fashioned people : "Be with us, and that to bless." God may be with us as a Judge, condemning us. It is thus He is with the wicked. We can face men only as God is with us as a Friend.

The secret of courage, then, is obedience. We are Christ's friends, He said, if we do whatsoever He commands us. It is the well-disciplined troops that defend Thermopylæ ; the mutinous soldiers are quickly put to rout. If we have placed ourselves unreservedly on Christ's side, then He will stand at our side against all the world.

"He has not learned the lesson of life," said Emerson stoutly, "who does not every day surmount a fear." And the best way to surmount fears is with Christ to surmount Calvary. There is no "red badge of courage" equal to the blood of the cross.

Glorifying God in Our Work

WORK is something for which to be profoundly grateful. Said Charles Kingsley: "Thank God every morning that you have something to do that day which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and to do your best will breed in you a hundred virtues which the idle never know." A very ancient Greek manuscript discovered recently contained some hitherto unknown sayings of Jesus, and one of them is: "Raise the stone, and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and I am there." Dr. van Dyke interprets this as meaning that the worker, though toiling only with wood and stone, will find Christ in his work.

If you want to find Christ in your work, and glorify God by it, you must enjoy your work. That is one cause of the superb success of President Roosevelt, he throws himself into all his tasks as if they were recreation. He was making a journey once, and rose from his bed in the car to make his fourteenth speech for the day and shake hands with the crowd. One of his companions was sympathizing with him, but he said, "No; don't feel sorry for me. I like it."

But we shall not enjoy our work unless we do it well. Mr. Meyer declares that a chimney sweep will stand higher than an archbishop in God's sight "if he has driven the soot out of the intricacies of old chimneys with more eager care and with nobler purpose than the archbishop has administered his diocese." Slovenly work never glorifies God.

Glorifying God in Our Work

Our labor will honor God the more the longer we toil faithfully at it. In a picture gallery in Belgium two pictures, one almost a daub, the other a splendid masterpiece, hang side by side. Both are the work of Rembrandt, but the one is his first painting, while the other was painted after years of hard practice had developed his powers. Do not make the fatal mistake of growing discouraged if you do not at once succeed in your work for God. One ingredient in success is always patience.

Wesley's rule for work was expressed in his famous maxim, "All at it, and always at it." The last half of the motto is especially necessary, if one would work well. On an ancient building in England is a motto that has become famous: "Do ye nexte thyng." It is by doing the next task, and the next after that, smoothly and unflinchingly, that great life works get done. Remember the story of the slothful Scottish student who could see, in a window opposite, only a hand, traveling patiently, day after day, down reams of paper. That plodding hand taught the student how to succeed. It was the hand of Sir Walter Scott.

The final rule for work that will honor God is this: Do it for God's sake. It is the motive that makes work glorious or ignoble. You have heard the story of the sculptor who carved with exquisite care a figure that was to be placed so far up on the cathedral tower that it would scarcely be seen. But when his fellow workmen laughed at his painstaking, he nobly said, "Nay; God will see it."

Christ, the Great Physician

To think of Christ as the Physician is to revolutionize the ordinary view of life. For most men look upon sin as a pleasure—unlawful, to be sure, but still pleasure ; but Christ sees sin to be pain.

The earthly physician is called only when we are sick. I have read that the Chinese have a better custom, paying the doctor to keep them well, and stopping his pay when they fall ill ! At any rate, it is a great mistake to seek Christ only in misfortune, and such procrastination is one of the chief reasons why misfortunes come.

Christ, like any earthly physician, does not come till He is called. He is always near, eagerly waiting to be called, but for our good He waits till we call Him. He knows that an uninvited physician can work no cure.

But when we call, how quickly He comes ! We may summon an earthly doctor by telephone, and he may be whirled toward us in an automobile, but Christ needs only the flash of a desire, and instantly He is with us.

Then, He comes always in love and pity. Earthly physicians are sometimes proud and pompous, but Christ is always meek and lowly. They are sometimes stern and harsh and gruff, but He is always the living sunshine. They do not always sympathize, they may grow callous ; but He pities "like as a father pitieth his children," and every new case finds in Him new loving kindness.

Christ, the Great Physician

Then, Christ's service is "without money and without price." The more skilful and famous an earthly physician, the more he is likely to charge; but here is the most skilful and famous of all physicians, and He is glad to come freely. Nay, He is glad to pay us for receiving Him, even giving us a kingdom!

Earthly physicians make mistakes; how often they blunder! It is so hard, with our poor vision, to make the right diagnosis, to prescribe the right medicines. But Christ's vision pierces beyond the reach of the X-rays, He never makes a mistake, His remedies are specifics. It is such a comfort to put ourselves under the care of such a physician, and be absolutely certain of getting well!

To be sure, like earthly physicians, Christ must sometimes use the probe and the knife. He must cut away diseased flesh, He must sear the wounds, He must give bitter draughts. Until there is harmless sin there cannot be painless surgery. But all of Christ's cuttings are to cure, and His bitter draughts are, to the understanding soul, sweeter than honey.

Yes, Christ has conquered death, the last enemy. He has conquered it in such fashion, once for all, that it need no longer have dominion over any one of us. We have only to look to Him, believing, and through our veins will rush the new life, the abundant life, the life that knows no waning and no ending.

"The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again."

The Pen Behind the Tapestry

WHEN Bishop Latimer was on trial for heresy, he was speaking freely in his own defence when he heard the scratch of a pen coming from behind the tapestry, and realized that a clerk, concealed there, was taking down every word he was saying. From that moment he spoke slowly, carefully weighing every word that he uttered.

Like that tapestry is the veil of eternity, and behind it sits ever One who is writing a "book of remembrance." "Of every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." How carefully we should speak, in view of that solemn and eternal record! Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, paraphrasing a line of Tennyson, writes :

"He is the King, I teach —
Though born of the throne or the sod —
Who doth but honor his speech
As if it were said by his God."

We think much of the negatives of speech—how we are not to talk. We are ready to assent to Washington's maxim, "Vile words should not be spoken, in jest or earnest"; though, to be sure, we often debase ourselves by smiling at language in an anecdote that would cause our cheeks to flush with indignation if it were spoken seriously—as if that made any difference!

A sin of the tongue that is seldom deplored is sarcasm, which Carlyle called "the natural language of the devil." Faber spoke truly: "No

The Pen Behind the Tapestry

one was ever corrected by a sarcasm ; crushed, perhaps, if the sarcasm was clever enough—but drawn nearer to God, never.” We are playing with edged tools indeed when we permit ourselves to use “cutting words.”

A sin of the tongue that is still more common is slander. Wesley and some of his preachers solemnly subscribed to a set of rules, agreeing “not to listen to anything concerning each other,” not willingly to believe it if they heard it ; and especially they agreed, as soon as they heard an evil report of any of their number, to tell it to him straightway, but not to tell any one else ! Those were wise rules. In rhyme they have thus been summed up :

“Five things observe with care
Of whom you speak,
To whom you speak,
And how, and when, and where.”

But we must not forget the positive rules for wise speech. And the first is, Be kind. Say of and to your friends to-day what you will wish you had said after they are dead.

The second rule is, Be brave. Others may speak for Christ better than you, but they are not speaking, and here is a little space that Christ wants you to fill. Do your best.

The third rule is, Be prompt. Opportunities for wise words will seldom wait for you to hunt through the dictionary and form fine phrases. It is by speaking as best you can as soon as you can that you learn to speak better.

Finally, trust in God. He will give you, “in that hour,” in every hour, what you shall say.

First-Fruits for God

IN one of his sermons, Phillips Brooks describes the lighting of a candle. We roll up a bit of paper and set it ablaze. It will not burn long. But we bring it to the candle-wick, there is a quick response, and its flickering, uncertain fire passes into the steady burning of the candle. If we had tried to light a piece of granite, no matter how hot the fire that we laid against it, it would not light, but would only crumble to pieces.

This is the difference between those that yield themselves to God and those that are disobedient to Him. Through the first, God can manifest His power and glory; through the second He cannot. The first, God renders resplendent and beautiful; the second, God must humble and break.

The secret of all successful living lies in the Jewish custom of giving the first-fruits to God. It was like the touch of the burning paper on the candle, or the match to the lamp or the gas jet, little in itself, but great in what it signified and made possible.

Whoever is ready and glad to give God the first-fruits of his life, will be ready and glad to give Him the second fruits also, and the third, and as much as He asks for. Whoever will give God the best, will of course give Him the next best, and the next.

For example, the first-fruits of your time, that morning hour or half-hour when your brain is

First-Fruits for God

clear and your thoughts leap easily to the heights of truth. Dedicate that to God. Use it in prayer, in meditation, on the Bible. You will find that the candle of your day's constancy and cheer will be lighted in those brief minutes.

Or, take the first-fruits of your money. Set apart to sacred uses the tenth of your income, or some other definite proportion as your heart prompts you. The result will be that then for the first time you will really possess your possessions, enjoy them, find them fruitful.

So it will be with your talent, whatever masterful ability God has given you. It is dead—oh, how dead!—until touched by the fire of consecration. Then it becomes brilliant with a heavenly radiance, and you sing, or speak, or write, with a power and splendor you had not approached before.

These first-fruits are not to be given to God as if He were a tax-collector, demanding a certain per cent of our lives, and, when that is given, having no further claim upon us. No; the first-fruits are only a symbol, only a token of the great truth that God owns us altogether, that He has a right to all we have and are, and that we are ready to yield it at an instant's call.

No Christian can be happy in his service of God until this thought takes possession of him, until he ceases to try to satisfy God with a portion of his being, and surrenders it unreservedly, simply taking back for his own use what God returns to him. There is no happiness in all the world like the knowledge that one belongs to God.

The Duty of Winsomeness

PAUL said he was ready to be all things to all men, if by any means he might win some one man. That is the object of winsomeness—to “win some” to Christ. That is the method of winsomeness—sympathy, tact, putting yourself in the other man’s place.

No one can be winsome that is selfish. If you are not interested in other people’s affairs, they will not be interested in you. That is the point of the proverbial advice, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Talk music to a musician—or get him to talk music to you. Get down on your knees and play marbles with the boys. Learn to laugh with those that laugh and weep with those that weep. Forget yourself. Don’t talk of your worries or accomplishments; talk of other people’s. Live in their lives. Be unselfish.

Now no one can be unselfish without Christ. The only way to get rid of our unworthy selves is to obtain His glorious Self to come in and take their place. And the only object that will hold us to unselfish service of others is love of Christ. No one is ever permanently, continually winsome that merely tries to win persons to himself or herself. Ah, no; there must be a motive beyond that!

My topic is “The Duty of Winsomeness,” and winsomeness has its birth in a sense of duty—our duty to love other people and help

The Duty of Winsomeness

them, our duty to love God and obey Him. But no one can be winsome merely from a sense of duty. Our winsomeness must be more than a task, it must be an instinct. Paul was not all things to all men from a sense of duty. At first he may have been, but as he kept on helping people in all kinds of ways, he soon became all things to all men by second nature. Helpfulness became a passion with him.

If a man is winsome, he needs no other factor for success. A winsome person always looks beautiful, though the features may be misshapen and the skin sallow. A winsome lawyer wins his cases. A winsome merchant sells his goods. A winsome teacher gets his scholars to study. And it is exactly so if one would be successful in "our Father's business"; winsomeness will count for more than any other quality.

We do not cultivate winsomeness in religious work as we should. We think it is enough to know our Bibles and love them, without contriving how we may win others to know them and love them. We are satisfied with correct doctrines, and do not study how we may render those doctrines attractive to others. We tell people they ought to do this and that, and imagine we have done our duty; but we have not, until we cause them to fall in love with their duty.

Oh, to be like our Lord, whom the people heard gladly, and who, lifted up on the cross, has ever since drawn men and nations to Himself!

Helping One Another

AFTER Jacob Riis had published his powerful picture of New York slums entitled "How the Other Half Lives," a stranger called at his office one day, and, finding him out, left a card: "I have read your book and have come to help.—*Theodore Roosevelt.*" And Mr. Riis adds, in telling the story, "No one ever helped as he did."

The greater the man, the readier he is to help, and to take pains about his helpfulness. A beautiful story tells how a famous singer, passing along a street in Lyons, was accosted by a beggar. He had nothing to give her, so he hid his face with his hat pushed down over his forehead, and sung a wonderful song that drew a large crowd, from whom he collected a goodly sum of money for the poor woman. He thought he was unknown, but when next he appeared on the stage the wildly applauding throng would not let him proceed until he had sung the song he had sung for the beggar.

It is pleasant and easy to help those that are in little need of help, our friends, good people, grateful people; but Christ wants us to help especially those that are lowest down in the mire. Rev. Charles Garrett persuaded a drunken cabman to sign the pledge, but he was soon drinking again. So Mr. Garrett went to him and asked, "John, when your horse slips down in the mud, what do you do?" "Why, sir, I help him up again." "Well, John, the road was slippery, I know, and you have fallen; but here's my hand

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to help you up again." The cabman took Mr. Garrett's hand, profoundly moved, and promised never to fall again.

It is as we try to help the people who most need help that we get closest to Christ, for there is where He is always at work. You have heard, have you not? the story of the preacher who climbed his church steeple so as to get close to God, and every Sunday dropped two written sermons on the heads below. When the preacher grew old, Christ called to him, "Come down and die." Greatly surprised, he called out from the steeple, "Where art Thou, Lord?" And Christ answered, "Down here among my people."

One thought that should constantly spur us to help others is the knowledge that it will soon be too late. Other chances to help may come, but not this chance, or a chance at this person. Heed Mrs. Sangster's earnest words :

" Ah, woe for the word that is never said
Till the ear is deaf to hear,
And woe for the lack to the fainting head
Of the ringing shout of cheer ;
Ah, woe for the laggard feet that tread
In the mournful wake of the bier."

And while we help others, we may be storing up help for ourselves. We can never be sure that we shall not ourselves need aid. "However rich a man is," said Joseph Parker, "he cannot do without some other man." Let us live for God and His world, and not to please ourselves ; and then all the world and God Himself will minister gladly to our every need.

What Giving Will do for You

A RICH woman dreamed that she went to heaven and there she saw a splendid mansion being built. "For whom is that?" she asked; and the answer was, "For your gardener."

Then she went on and saw a tiny cottage being built, and asked, "For whom is that?" The answer was, "For you."

The rich woman was filled with dismay. "Why," she said, "my gardener has always lived in a little cottage. He might have had a better house, but he gave away so much to miserable poor folks. But I am used to living in a mansion; I shouldn't know how to live in a cottage."

Then came a significant reply: "The Master Builder is doing His best with the material sent up."

The result of our giving upon ourselves, our character, our happiness, our prospects, is not, to be sure, a very lofty consideration, but it is an important one, and very effective. If people only knew how much good it would do them to be liberal!

A banker gave his boy half a dollar to invest as a lesson in business, telling him to put it out at interest, and if he did it wisely, his capital should be increased.

The boy came across a poor lad, who was ragged and hungry, and gave him the half dollar. When the banker heard of this he rebuked the boy for his lack of business sense. "But," said

What Giving Will do for You

he, "I'll try you once more. Here is a dollar. See how well you can invest it."

The boy burst out laughing, "My Sunday-school teacher told me," he said, "that giving to the poor is lending to the Lord, and she said He would return it double; but I didn't think He would do it so soon."

Indeed, it is often literally true, as George Herbert wrote, that

"Who shuts his hand hath lost his gold;
Who opens it hath it twice told."

Or, as Whittier sings in the same strain :

"Hands that ope but to receive
Empty close; they only live
Richly who can richly give."

And yet there is no immediate or necessary connection between giving to the poor and increase of our own wealth. If there were, men would all give from selfish motives, and there would be no real giving at all. Let us thank God that there is not.

But even when giving leaves us poorer in worldly goods, it vastly enriches us in the goods of heaven. It broadens our sympathies. It widens our experience. It blesses us with gratitude. It bestows on us the mind of the Master. It gives us an insight into divine things. It comforts us when sorrows come. It wins the loftiest of all honors, the praise of God.

When it will do all this for us, and do it certainly and ceaselessly, is it not amazing that our gifts are so small, so inconstant, and so grudging?

Influencing in Spite of Ourselves

SPURGEON used to tell of a man in Scotland who had come under the terrible power of strong drink. One day he went to the tavern, and took his little girl with him to lead him home after he had become drunk. He carried her on his shoulder. The poor child, as they approached the tavern, heard from within the sound of shouting and fighting, and begged her father not to go in. As she pleaded, a tear from her eye fell on the man's cheek. Big man as he was, the influence of that little tear saved him to a temperate life, and he became one of the engineers of the great railroad bridge across the Firth at Edinburgh.

One of the most delightful of our studies up in heaven, I fancy, will be the history of the influence of little words and deeds. We shall find that the progress of the world has depended on these far more than on what the world thinks great. How interesting will be the revised histories in the libraries of heaven !

It is literally true that every word we say sets in motion vibrations of ether that widen out and go on beating forever. In the same way every act of ours, though done in secret, makes an impression that nothing can efface. Somewhere there is ringing every sentence that fell from the lips of our Lord ; somewhere there are impressions of every act of Judas.

Now if this is literally true, as every student of physics knows, of our words and deeds, it is true

Influencing in Spite of Ourselves

also of the spiritual result of whatever we do and say. Every act has some influence, for good or evil, and it is an unending influence. As Henry Burton sung :

“ Never a word is said
But it trembles in the air,
And the truant voice has sped
To vibrate everywhere ;
And perhaps far off in eternal years
The echo may ring upon our ears.”

When we go to bed at night, do we think of our day's work as done? It is never done ; it has only begun. That cross word is still at work, poisoning some life while we are asleep. That kind smile is still at work, making some life sweeter, though we have forgotten all about it.

Do such thoughts make our lives too solemn? Do you feel that you never can stop to think of the influence of your every word and deed?

You need not. Only make the heart right, and all your influence will be right ; for “ out of the heart are the issues of life.”

The brook does not need to plan all its lovely curves, its dancing ripples, its pleasant songs as it flows over its stony bed, the drinks it gives to thirsty passers-by, the contributions it makes to the mill-wheel and the great river and the ocean. The brook merely flows on, from a pure source, and the rest takes care of itself. But if some one should put a package of arsenic in the source of the brook, how sadly all this would be changed ! Yet even then the brook would not plan the harm it would do ; it would only flow on, out of an impure source.

The Work That is in Us

THERE is a story of a farmer who had a great, rugged "harvest hand." A visitor to the farm was looking at this laborer and remarked, "That fellow ought to be chock full of work."

"He is," drily answered the farmer, "because I've never been able to get any out of him."

A large number of Christians are like that farm laborer—with splendid possibilities, but limited realizations. It isn't how big you are that counts, but how much you do with your bigness—or your littleness. How many times I have planned out some Christian work that I could do—I knew I could—and gone on quite satisfied, as if I had done it. But God was not satisfied!

A large number of Christians, too, are fiercely active about their worldly business, and make that an excuse for not doing work for the church. As the wise Frenchman, Amiel, wrote in his journal, "Activity is only beautiful when it is holy; that is to say, when it is spent in the service of that which passeth not away." Tried by this test, how much of our work is beautiful and how much is ugly?

Of course, I do not mean that only church work is holy and beautiful. All work is holy when it is done for God, and no work—not even church work—is holy when it is done for one's self.

Many think that they cannot work for God, as if working for Him required greater ability than to work for one's self. Really, it requires much

The Work That is in Us

less, for God helps us when we try to work for Him, but He does not help us when we only try to work for ourselves. As Miss Havergal once wrote: "If any work is really God's giving, and He puts it either into our hearts to devise or into the power of our hands to do, no fear but He will also provide stuff sufficient, whether metal or mental."

" Obey, then, the Master !
The furnace is steady,
The bruised metal ready ;
Strike, welding it faster !"

If we have this ideal of work for Christ, that it is our main business in life and that He is ready to help us in it, then we shall always be trying to better our Christian work. We shall paint away eagerly on our life canvas, because the Great Artist is in the next room, and comes in every hour to look over our shoulder.

Let us lay down a programme with one feature in it, just one new thing we will do for the Master. Then, having done it, let us add one more task, and so on, joyfully and endlessly. For is not Christ, joyfully and endlessly, doing new and larger things for us ?

The Chief Need of Missions

“THE foreign mission movement,” says Secretary Perkins, of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, “was born in prayer, and prayer is the vital breath by which it lives.”

This is quite as true of the home fields. The men that are at work among the degraded and ignorant of our own land are profoundly conscious of their own weakness and the weakness of the churches back of them. They know that they can fight successfully the great mass of iniquity that ever confronts them, only as they are buoyed up on a greater tide of prayer.

Read the letters that come from the missionaries, or hear their pleas as they address us during their brief and overworked “vacations.” You will find letters and speeches crowded with requests for prayer.

Money is needed to carry on missionary enterprises, sorely needed. Money is concrete life. It is the form our labor takes in the process of transfer from one to another. I have not gone to Africa or Idaho as a missionary, but I have labored here for a day, and gained two dollars, which I have sent to Africa or Idaho. There it is again transformed into labor. Therefore, to the extent of a day, I have myself been a missionary in Africa or Idaho.

Money, therefore, is needed, for it is life. But prayer is needed far more than money, because prayer is back of money. If we pray for missions we shall give for missions; if we do not pray for

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them, we shall give very little, and that grudgingly, if we give at all. Money is the steam that makes the engine go ; but prayer is the fire that makes the steam.

Indeed, further back than our gifts, it was prayer in the first place that made men missionaries at all. As Mrs. J. H. Randall said once : "Carey, Judson, Livingstone, Keith Falconer, Hannington, Paton, Fidelia Fiske, Ann Hasseltine, the haystack heroes, the consecrated band of Moravian missionaries who went out from Herrnhut—all these first gave themselves to the 'regions beyond,' and were inspired to do this while in secret prayer they poured out their souls to God for guidance and help."

We do not pray enough for missions in our private prayers. They are crammed with eager petitions for ourselves, and forget the millions who are in so much greater need than we can ever be. They deal with the little area of our small lives, and do not enlarge us as they reach out to the ends of the earth.

Nor do we pray enough for missions in our missionary meetings. It is well to learn what is going on in missionary fields. Information is the match that lights the fire of prayer. But if the information, as so often happens, ends with itself, it is a match gone out !

God does hear prayer, and answer it. He delights in large prayers, prayers as large as His thoughts for the world. He delights in definite prayers, that name men and needs. He delights in expectant prayers, that are sure they will win results, even in the antipodes. Let such prayers be ours.

Burden-Bearing and Burden-Sharing

No man liveth to himself alone. We all need one another. The world is daily coming closer together, bound ever in a more necessary and intricate net of mutual helpfulness. Wireless telegraphy is the latest agent that is knitting the nations. Dr. Conwell says of it: "Marconi is saying to Russia, 'You need the United States'; and to the United States, 'You need Russia, and I will work and bring you together.' That is Christianity."

It is Christ's teaching—and who else ever really taught it?—that nothing is given us merely for our own use. Said Bacon: "The real use of all knowledge is this: that we should dedicate the reason which was given us by God to the use and advantage of man." That is true not only of our reason, but of all our powers. We have nothing, absolutely nothing, that was not given us, and it was given us on condition of stewardship—that we are to use it as a sacred trust for the benefit of the world.

Indeed, this is the secret of possession. "What I gave, I had; what I kept, I lost." He who saveth his life shall lose it. There is no better way to help one's self than to help others. This truth is well taught in the following description of two days:

"A perfect day! I tried to hold it fast;
To make each hour my own, and sip its sweets
As if it were a flower, and I its bee.
No one should come between me and my joy,

Burden-Bearing and Burden-Sharing

My will should rule my actions for one day.
Ah, yes! it slipped away, its secret kept,
And hid from me behind the sunset clouds.

“ Another day : ‘ God help me use the hours ! ’
I said, ‘ and let Thy will be done, not mine.’
I watched if might be some one needed help,
If I might speak a word of cheer, or give
A hand, or even softly step where wounds
Were aching. Day of sweet revealing ! when
It passed, it left its perfume in my heart.”

Paul puts strangely together (in Galatians 6), within a few lines of each other, the seemingly contradictory precepts, “ Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,” and “ Every man shall bear his own burden.” Here, however, there is no real contradiction. The best way to bear another man’s burden is lovingly to help him bear it himself. Burden-bearing, physical and spiritual, is the only way to strength. Charity workers nowadays are wisely taking for their motto, “ Not alms, but a friend.” Says Washington Gladden : “ The law of sympathy, the law of self-help—they are not twain, but one.” You can best help another by getting him to help himself.

One more thought : Allow yourself to be helped. You need it, and others need to help you. Dr. J. R. Miller wisely says, “ We can never make the most and best of life if we refuse to be taught by others than ourselves.” Not only receive criticism, but invite it. If you have a friend brave enough to tell you your faults, thank God for him every day ; he is your most precious earthly possession. You can never help others as much as you should unless you are humbly eager to be helped by others.

Not Ashamed of the Gospel

“SPEECH is silver, silence is gold.” We often hear maxims to that effect. Says Bruyère: “We seldom repent of speaking little, very often of speaking too much.”

Now such exhortations, admirably useful when speech is foolish or malicious, are contemptible and false when speech is, or should be, the bold, loving, helpful testimony for Jesus Christ. Speech then is golden, and silence is pewter. It is then that we often have sad cause to repent of speaking too little.

A writer in the *Chicago Standard* says: “‘Therefore let thy words be few.’ But that does not mean to be entirely mum. Some people seem to have read no further in their Bibles than this. They have not seen the ‘Go, tell.’ Do they stop to think that they may be rashly silent as well as rashly clamorous? In this age of the world, and with the opportunities and importunities for testimony given, is any one exonerated from speaking for his King?”

Talmage said forcibly once: “You cannot afford to be silent when God and the Bible and the things of eternity are assailed. Your silence gives consent to the bombardment of your Father’s house. You allow a slur to be cast on your mother’s dying pillow. In behalf of the Christ, who for you went through the agonies of assassination on the rocky bluff back of Jerusalem, you dared not face a sickly joke.”

At the time when Paul declared that he was “not ashamed of the gospel,” Christianity was

Not Ashamed of the Gospel

weak and despised. Its followers were few and lowly, mostly slaves and ignorant. If he was not ashamed of it then, why should we be, now that Christian nations are the most powerful of earth, and Christian men the wisest and richest and most influential, and to belong to Christ's church is universally counted a credit?

But Paul's "not ashamed" is an example of that common figure of speech that palpably understates in order to emphasize. His readers knew well that Christ was Paul's one glory. "Not ashamed"? Why, he was superbly proud of Christ. He wore Him as his crown. He was Christ's ambassador to the nations.

Deep into Paul's heart had sunk these words of his Lord: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my works, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed." Paul would have Christ proud of him, and he was proud of Christ.

The dumb devil has had Christian lips long enough. Every Christian should be a doer; but he must also be a speaker. Out of the mouth confession is made unto salvation—our salvation, and the salvation of the world.

We must be modest in our testimony. Our speeches are short and very simple. We are not to care for the words that man's wisdom teaches. Let it be our wish only to obtain the fulfillment of this prayer:

" Lord, I beseech that I may teach
With love like Thine to me;
And so, with wise and loving speech
Bring many a heart to Thee."

Minor Moralities

STRICTLY speaking, there are no "minor" moralities. On occasion, the least law of conduct may become of permanent importance, and observance or non-observance of it may control a destiny. For example, promptness may be considered a "minor" morality; but not in the case of a physician. Cleanliness is usually held to be a "minor" morality; but one's bodily condition affects so profoundly one's spiritual condition that a popular proverb puts cleanliness next to godliness. This understanding of the matter should run through all our thinking, that every "minor" morality is likely to become a "major" one.

First, that same promptness. "Procrastination is the thief of time,"—and of more. It makes away with peace of mind, with mental vigor, with all kinds of success. "I wish," said Nevius, "it were no worse than a thief. It is a murderer; and that which it kills is the immortal soul." Decision of character is needed for time and eternity. "Faith in to-morrow instead of Christ," said Dr. Cheever, "is Satan's nurse for man's perdition."

Another "minor" morality closely allied to the "major" ones is the cleanliness just mentioned. Rumford declared: "So great is the effect of cleanliness upon man, that it extends even to his moral character. Virtue never dwelt long with filth; nor do I believe there ever was a person scrupulously attentive to cleanliness who was a consummate villain."

Politeness is a very large "minor" morality.

Minor Moralities

Witherspoon finely defined politeness as "real kindness kindly expressed," and Lord Chatham said it is "benevolence in trifles, or the preference of others to ourselves in the daily occurrences of life." Chesterfield, that traditional model of politeness, asserted that "it simply consists in treating others just as you love to be treated yourself"; that is the Golden Rule.

Hospitality is usually ranked as a "minor" morality, and yet Lavater said, "As you receive the stranger, so receive your God." "I was a stranger and ye took me in"—that is one of the chief blessings Christ will pronounce on the day of judgment. If, as some fear, the grace of hospitality is perishing among us, it is a serious matter, for it means that we are growing selfish. As we entertain strangers, we entertain, oh! so many angels, unawares.

And what shall we say of patience? Franklin, who so well exemplified the virtue, said of it: "He that can have patience can have what he will." "Endurance," said Lowell, "is the crowning quality, and patience all the passion of great hearts." It is often shown best in lowly lives, but none the less it is godlike.

There are many moralities that deserve a place in the list, but I will name only one more—moderation. One of Joubert's sentences of insight is this: "Moderation consists in being moved as angels are moved." It consists in seeing life in its true proportions, not despising the world, yet not resting upon it, and always remembering the vital things. "Let your moderation"—such moderation as this—"be known to all men."

Our National Heritage

DEAN FARRAR once asked the question, "Upon what does the progress of nations depend?" and answered it in these noble words: "There are two things which every man and woman in the world can do. They can preserve the wealth of noble thoughts and purposes, which is our chief heritage from the great ones of the past, and they can aim at the continuous usefulness of setting a high and pure example, so that they may be ready at any moment, if the sudden call of God should come to them, to do deeds which shall leave behind them an aroma of immortal memory. It is only thus—first, by the mighty achievements of great men, and next, by the steadfast faithfulness of the undistinguished—that the true progress of nations and of the world is carried on."

Those two sentences are a sufficient programme of patriotism: preserve the best of the past, utilize it in a worthy present. Our national heritage is not fine buildings, for they decay; nor even broad farms, rich mines, and splendid forests, for these may become unproductive. Ours is a heritage of ideas that are immortal, and that grow more valuable with age. Some nations, like Greece, Holland, and Switzerland, whose leagues are most contracted, yet have received the richest of heritages.

There was once displayed in a jeweler's window a banner beautifully wrought in flashing gems. Every color was brilliantly there, and the tiny flag seemed made of solid light. It was

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a true symbol of our nation, whose glory is made up of innumerable jewels, each of them the life of a devoted citizen. As we live our lives faithfully, we separate citizens, the great country will be prosperous and happy; and not otherwise.

Banners have been made like that jeweled marvel, save that the bits of color have been furnished by electric lights. There were thousands of them, but every one was needed. Here and there was a bulb that gave no light, and the gap it left was very striking. Every citizen, however humble, is needed in a free country, and it is impossible to say what momentous issue may hang upon his personality. For example, at one time in the State of Massachusetts, the renowned scholar, orator, and statesman, Edward Everett, lost the governorship through the vote of a young man casting his first ballot.

The heritage of money, house, and lands that we receive personally, we cherish carefully. How about our share of the national heritage? Do we really make it ours? The whole of it belongs to every citizen. By study of history, by thoughtful observation, by wide-awake action, do we actually grasp our national heritage?

If we do, how it enriches and enlarges us! The true patriot is twice a man. He lives once to himself and once to the world. He is the incarnation of a mighty past. Let us all pray this prayer by Julia Ward Howe:

“So may ancestral conquests live
In what we have and what we give,
And the great boons we hold from Thee
Turn to enrich humanity.”

The Imperialism of Christianity

It does not often realize it, but nevertheless the Church of Christ is imperial. It was founded for world-wide dominion, and it has never lost the ideal. That ideal, appearing so preposterous when entertained by a dozen Jewish peasants, has now reached not only possibility but almost certainty.

Napoleon, the world-conqueror, is reported to have said during his exile at St. Helena: "My armies have forgotten me even while living, even as the Carthaginian army forgot Hannibal. Such is *our* power. A single battle lost crushes us, and adversity scatters our friends. The progress of the faith and the government of the Church are a perpetual miracle. Nations pass away, thrones crumble, but the Church remains."

Every Christian will hold his head higher as he realizes this. He is a citizen of no transient empire. As soon as a man joins the church he is invested with somewhat of the dignity and power of an eternal and universal institution. Let us realize the truth of Dwight Williams' lines:

" From sea to sea
Shall His dominion be,
According to the promise written ;
And He in scorn and insult smitten
Shall hear the welcome salutations
Of long-oppressed and weary nations ;
And He shall rule
Star-crowned and beautiful."

But when we think of our more than one hundred Protestant sects and the great Greek and

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Roman churches, and when we remember our manifold diversities of creed, this coming time when Christ's one Church shall fill the whole earth seems far-off indeed. Dr. Behrends, in that wonderful address delivered just before his death in the presence of the Ecumenical Missionary Conference at New York, urged that the world-wide empire for which Christianity is destined will never come till two things happen: there must be a fusion of churches, there must be a fusion of creeds; we must believe together, and we must work together. And he insisted that foreign missions will compel this simplification of our faith and this federation of our forces.

At any rate, however it is to be brought about, no Christian can doubt that it must be brought about. A true Christian who has an ideal short of this imperial thought never has existed and never will exist. "We, as well as Nansen's men," says Alexander Maclaren, "ought to feel that the name of the ship that we are on is the 'Fram' ('Forward,') and should take the dying words of the Roman Catholic martyr missionary saints for ours: 'Amplius, amplius' ('further, further afield')."'

But there is danger lest these large considerations may lead us to neglect the little endeavors through which alone the great results will come. "If I had the choice," said Moody, "of preaching like Gabriel, swaying men at my will, without winning them to Christ, or taking them one by one in private and leading them to the truth, how gladly would I choose the latter." Such quiet ways are the ways of most of us, but—the Kingdom "cometh without observation."

The Right Use of Ability

FIRST, *get* the ability. Many talk about the use of ability who have no ability to use. They have the seeds of it implanted in them by their Maker, who never formed a man without a destiny ; but they are letting the seeds decay.

The first use of ability—*any* ability—is to get more ability. A man who is not growing cannot help others to grow. As Bayard Taylor finely sings :

“He who would lead must first himself be led ;
Who would be loved, be capable of love
Beyond the utmost he receives ; who claims
The rod of power must first have bowed his
 head,
And, being honored, honor what’s above.
This know the men who leave the world their
 names.”

First, get the ability ; then, consecrate it. To consecrate one’s ability is to devote it to the highest uses God opens before it. For instance, to quote Rev. Clarence A. Vincent, “Henry Ward Beecher would have made a splendid auctioneer. His keen wit, his commanding voice, his great body, his striking face and head, his power over men, would have made him a prince at the block. The sale of the young slave-woman from his pulpit one Sunday morning proves what he could have been, but it would have been a crime for him to do it. His wit was to illuminate great themes ; his voice to summon men to God and noble action ; his face to shine with great emotion,

The Right Use of Ability

and his brain to think world-shaping thoughts; and his power over men to be exerted for man and not for money.”

Use your ability as a trust. Get to thinking of it as something apart from yourself. You are an underworker of the Master Carpenter, and your abilities are the tools He lends you to work with.

Use your ability boldly. It is more than a dead tool. If it has been dedicated to God, it is like the tools in the fairy story, which guide the hand that uses them.

Use your ability freely. Freely you received it. Did the artist buy his talent in any store, or the musician pay so many dollars for her genius? Freely give it.

Use your ability happily. Man's power is the only power in the universe that mopes. Electricity never sulks. Gravitation is always briskly ready. Sunlight laughs as it runs on its errands. Good cheer multiplies talent many fold.

Listen to the stirring words of Dr. Babcock:

“ Be strong !

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift,
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift ;
Shun not the struggle—face it ; 'tis God's gift.

“ Be strong !

Say not the days are evil. Who's to blame?
And fold the hands and acquiesce—oh, shame !
Stand up, speak out, and bravely, in God's name.

“ Be strong !

It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day how long ;
Faint not—fight on ! To-morrow comes the song.”

Children of God

WHO does not know who Helen Keller is, the marvelous deaf, blind, and dumb girl? Thus fearfully bereft from babyhood, yet she has learned to speak, and she has obtained an excellent education in Radcliffe College.

Until she was six years old, Hellen Keller was told nothing of religious matters. At that age she was taken to Phillips Brooks, and very tenderly and lovingly did the great preacher tell the little girl of God, her Father in heaven.

When the simple sermon was over, Helen said, "I knew that before. I think I have always known it."

So it seems that the knowledge of the Father is a natural instinct of the soul, a longing created within the human race, never satisfied till Christ came, but since that time growing more confident and blessed every year.

Some would have us believe that this conception of God as our Father and of men as His children is a thought that belittles the infinite Ruler of the universe. No better answer can be made to such objectors than was made to Collins, the skeptic, who once asked an untaught farmer, "Is your God a great or a little God?"

"He is both," was the reply.

"Why, how can that be?"

"He is so great," the farmer answered, "that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; and so little that He can dwell in my heart."

It is necessary to get a conception of God's

Children of God

power; without it we shall not be strong ourselves. But far more necessary is it to gain the thought of God's love. What is it to know one's self the child of God? It is to enjoy the most exalted companionship at all times. It is to have absolutely no fear or worries for the future. It is to receive all men as brothers. It is to be confident of perfect guidance. It is to be sure of power adequate to all our needs. It is to have heaven on earth while we live, and an eternity of heaven hereafter.

How may we become children of God? We are children of God already. We may have wandered from the Father's house, but we are His children, even in the "far country."

How may we know that we are children of God, entering consciously, by intimate daily experience, into this blessed relationship? By doing God's will. That is the way a child comes to know his earthly father. He must walk in the way his father marks out for him, refraining from what his father forbids and doing what his father commands. In that way he comes to realize his father's wisdom and power and love. Just so, the more closely we live with God, studying His revealed will for men and conforming our lives to it, the more certainly shall we know Him to be our Father. Then we can make our own these happy words of Marianne Farningham's:

"Our Father knows, our Father cares —
How great Thy gentleness!
We dare to live, and dare to die,
Who are not fatherless.
Dear Father, whom we cannot see,
Our life is glad because of Thee."

Individual Work for Christ

“THE vast majority of Christians in this day are useless,” stoutly declared Dr. Talmage. “The most of the Lord’s battalion belong to the reserve corps. The most of the crew are asleep in the hammocks. The most of the metal is under the hills.”

If this is so—and there is much truth in it—then it is a terribly sad condition of affairs, since Christians are the salt of the earth, and if they lose their savor, wherewith shall the world be salted? By virtue of his calling, his powers, his blessings, and his opportunities, there is no one on earth that should be so fiercely active as the Christian; and Christians are active enough, but is it always about their Father’s business?

One of the tombs best worth seeing in St. Paul’s Cathedral bears these noble words: “Major-General Gordon, who at all times, everywhere, gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathy to the suffering, his heart to God; died at Khartoum, 26th January, 1885.” Over the grave of Alexander Mackay, that ingenious, undaunted, mechanic-missionary to Uganda, are set the words: “A Doer of the Word.” Now these are splendid epitaphs. How can we earn their like?

Not by proxy work. Not by delegating all our good deeds to a committee, a pastor, a board or a society. We must support these; they vastly enlarge the churches’ power for good. But they can never take the place of individual service.

Individual Work for Christ

A discouraged young doctor was visited by his farmer father. "I'm not getting along at all," said the young man. The father sat near that morning and watched his son care for twenty-five unfortunates in the "Free Dispensary." "I thought you said you were not getting along?" he inquired. "I did," was the reply; "there's no money in this." "No money?" shouted the old man. "Why, if I had helped twenty-five people in a month as you have in one morning, I'd bless God that my life counted for something. Keep right on, and I'll gladly work on the farm to support you."

We are all so slow to see what this old farmer saw, namely, that the only life worth living is a life of helpfulness, and that the best kind of helpfulness springs from personal contact. Lady Holland was constantly complaining because she had nothing to occupy her time. One day she uttered her characteristic lament in the presence of the poet Rogers, who gave her some sarcastic but valuable advice: "Try something new, Lady Holland; try doing a little good." There is no ennui in a life of Christian service. Every day is full of fresh interest. Every night is full of peace.

Let us all adopt for our own this prayer by the ill-fated Maltbie D. Babcock, who so beautifully exemplified its spirit in his life :

" O Lord, I pray
That for this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand
From Thy command —
Not to be served, but to serve."

Religion and Patriotism

At the battle of Modder River, in the South African war, a number of Canadians were killed. The brother of one of these slain soldiers was a merchant in Montreal. On receipt of the sad news he telegraphed to the governor-general of Canada, and asked to be appointed, at his own expense, in his brother's place.

This stirring incident illustrates one of our duties toward our country—we must be ready to die for her. And this not only in war, but we must be ready for her sake to oppose angry and desperate criminals, or wear out our lives in toilsome service. The only questions are whether she needs our lives, and in what way she needs them.

The story is told of a Spartan mother that she inquired eagerly of the result of a battle just fought. "All your five sons are slain," was the reply. "Unhappy wretch," answered she, "I did not ask you about my children, but about my country." "All's well with that," said the soldier. "Then," answered the heroic mother, "let those mourn that are miserable. My country is safe, and I am happy."

Yes, every true patriot is self-forgetful. When the nation's interests are at stake, he takes no thought of his money-getting or his reputation-getting or even of his dear ones and his home. "First things first," and his country is one of the first things.

A true patriot is humble. His country, he

Religion and Patriotism

knows, is made up of land and water, trees and hills and houses, but even more is it made up of people. He cannot trust and honor his country without trusting and honoring its people. He walks with humility, therefore, before the common will, and does not lightly or arrogantly set himself in opposition to it.

At the same time, the true patriot is proud. He dreams of his country's triumphs as if they were his own. He exults in her every achievement. He cons her resources. He pores over her history. His ambitions for her surpass his ambitions for himself.

Above all, the true patriot must be religious. He cannot sacrifice himself for his native land without religion, for the spirit of religion is sacrifice. Without religion he will lack constancy to die for her and strength to live for her. Without religion he will be blind to her chief glories and loftiest possibilities. The man of a godlike faith, and he alone, can make his own these noble words of Whittier's :

“Our thought of thee is glad with hope,
Dear country of our love and prayers ;
Thy way is down no fatal slope,
But up to freer sun and airs.

“The fathers sleep, but men remain
As true and wise and brave as they ;
Why count the loss without the gain ?
The best is that we have to-day.

“Oh, land of lands ! to thee we give
Our love, our trust, our service free ;
For thee thy sons shall nobly live,
And at thy need shall die for thee.”

True Philanthropy

THAT topic implies that there is a false philanthropy, and there is. The same deeds may be prompted by ostentation as by brotherly love. The obstinate purpose to propagate some peculiar tenet may lead to missionary effort quite as extensive as the longing, for the world's sake, to spread abroad Christ's truth. Rivalry with some other man may lead to emulation of his good deeds.

We need to scan our benefactions with care, therefore, to learn whether they are real benevolences, whether the will goes with the deed and vivifies it. Of course, great gifts may do great good in spite of an unworthy motive, yet, so far as the giver is concerned, better a dollar given in the spirit of love than a million dollars given without it.

How can we get this love for men, this philanthropy? In the first place, we must know men. Without the knowledge of men's needs it is as impossible to help them as it is for a disciple of Spencer to pray to his God whose name is Unthinkable. If Christ is the corner-stone of missions, information is the first foundation course. If every church member read his missionary magazine every month, and added thereto each month a missionary biography, not only would the general intelligence of the church be decidedly raised, but it would for the first time adequately set itself about its great task of winning the world.

In the second place, true philanthropy is im-

True Philanthropy

possible without actual contact with men. Missions require Boards for their proper management—societies, committees, secretaries, treasurers. But unless the church members in some way get into personal touch with some one missionary and some one sin burdened soul, mission treasuries will run dry and mission Boards will be unsupported. There must be love of one soul before there can be love of souls.

And in the third place, true philanthropy is impossible without self-denial. No man can serve two masters. No man can at the same time serve self and some other man. Martin the soldier was setting forth gayly from Amiens, when a beggar, the cold wintry air chilling him through his rags, asked an alms. Martin had no money, but with a happy smile he drew his sword, cut in two his handsome cloak, and gave the beggar half. That night the soldier dreamed he saw Christ in heaven wearing that parted garment. "Who gave Thee Thy cloak?" he heard the angels ask; and to his rapture the Lord replied, "My brother gave it to me." So it was that the soldier became St. Martin, the beloved Bishop of Tours.

That is the test of our brother-love: what are we sharing with our brother? What does philanthropy cost us? Are we simply saying, "I am sorry," and putting our pocket handkerchiefs to our eyes, or are we proving our sorrow with foot and hand and purse? No one is a complete man who is wrapped up in himself. He is like a lamp never lighted or a furnace without fire.

A Strong Weak Man

THERE is a Samson in every one—possible power, possible weakness; a judge, an underling; a warrior, a captive; a hero, a slave; a Nazarite, a voluptuary; keen-sighted, blind.

Every time we yield to a sinful impulse, we confirm the lower Samson; every time we conquer an evil desire, we strengthen the nobler Samson.

The world is full of Delilahs. There is no need to seek them out, that we may try our strength with them; they press upon us at every turn. They are fair to the eye and deceitful to the mind. If you want to recognize your real temptations, do not look among the things you dislike, but among your desires, your enjoyments, your affections.

Nothing can conquer the Delilahs except "the expulsive power of a *new* affection." Nothing can change our weakness into strength, but using for God the little strength we have. When Samson used his strength for God, he was a hero. When he thought his strength would endure a moment's parley with evil, he fell.

Therefore it is in the daily routine, and not in large events, that our weakness is to be built up into power. A slender girl, who goes quietly about her humble tasks, making home a sweet place, cooking healthful food, gathering up the dust, mending torn garments, and healing torn hearts with sympathy and love, is stronger than Samson; and when the great crises come, she is more to be trusted than he. Thomas Bailey Aldrich has put this truth in a beautiful parable:

A Strong Weak Man

“Manoah’s son, in his blind rage malign,
Tumbling the temple down upon his foes,
Did no such feat as yonder delicate vine
That day by day untired holds up a rose.”

The secret of it all is in the soul, the mind. A man’s strength or weakness does not lie in externals, in muscles or learning, in oratory or inventive skill. The deep things of character alone uphold against the deep things of temptation. As it is not on the surface of the body and in the light of day that the battle is fought between our physical existence and the crafty microbes of disease, but the contest is decided far within, and our best defence against those insidious enemies is merely what is called “a good constitution,” so it is no exterior combat that wins for the soul its spiritual life or its eternal death. “As a man thinketh in his heart, *so is he.*”

In one of his masterly sonnets, Lloyd Mifflin has brought out the lesson of Samson’s life :

“Bent upon love, and beautiful as day
Samson the youth to Timnath passed along;
Musing of her, he hummed a desert song —
When lo! a lion barred his onward way.
Who would be victor in the unequal fray?
He thought of love, and laughed that he was strong,
And conquered. Little did he deem, ere long,
That lion Passion him would heartless slay.
Now many a man in youth’s supremest hour
Who fells the lions in his path, will find
Some dread Delilah, as the years entice;
Shorn of his will and of his pristine power,
He—following the primrose path of vice —
Falls with the falling temple of his mind!”

Trusting Christ

JOSEPH ADDISON, at the outset of his career, was sailing from France to Italy, when his vessel was overtaken by a storm so violent that the captain himself gave up all for lost. They were brought, however, safely to port ; whereupon the poet wrote his immortal hymn beginning :

“How are Thy servants blest, O Lord !
How sure is their defence !
Eternal wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence.”

It is the storms of life that bring us to a knowledge of God and a firm reliance upon His goodness. If we never undertake hard things, if we never breast the waves, we shall never feel the everlasting arms underneath.

That is why we must trust Christ for strength. We cannot long strive to do His will without encountering obstacles, even perils. Worldliness will oppose us, sloth, men's opinions, our own lower ambitions, the active hostility of the evil. “I can do all things,” said Paul, “in Him that strengtheneth me.” He could not have said that until he had attempted all things.

The Christian wants to know just one thing about a proposed course of action. He does not inquire, “Is it easy ? politic ? safe ? profitable ? popular ?” He asks merely, “Is it God's will for me ?” He has taken to heart Longfellow's couplet :

“Do thy duty, that is best ;
Leave unto thy Lord the rest !”

With this principle to guide us, we can never

Trusting Christ

go too far. The Chevalier Bayard, that "knight without reproach or fear," was once led by his impetuous courage for so long a distance in front of his victorious host that he alone followed the fleeing foe into their citadel and was captured. But in recognition of his great valor they released him. There is never any real danger when we "follow the Gleam," when we pursue God's ideal for us. Blessed indeed is he, as Lowell sings, "who dares to be in the right—with two or three!"

The danger lies all in the opposite direction—behind us. When we reach the spirit world, we shall see clearly—God grant it be not in undying regret!—how sad was our defeat when we chose what men call safety and ease in preference to what Christ calls peace and security. Men that would find their lives, in popularity, luxury, wealth, lose them lamentably and irretrievably. Men that gladly lose their lives, in difficult, trustful endeavor, they alone find them.

And finally, it is only by a constant apprenticeship in faith, exercised through small events and daily duties, that we are enabled to meet the severe tests which poverty, sickness, loneliness or death brings them, with equanimity and strength. Wordsworth, that Christian poet, saw this clearly and wrote :

"One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists—one only: an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power,
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good."

Confessing Christ

WHEN Thorwaldsen was molding his sublime statue of Christ that stands in the "Lady Church," Copenhagen, at first he represented our Lord with His hands uplifted as if pouring a blessing upon the world. The effect, however, though full of grace and beauty, was not what he desired, and the statue now shows Christ in the more divine attitude of entreaty, His hands outstretched as if He would cry to every sin-laden soul, "Come unto me, and rest."

There can be no question as to Christ's desire for us. Not all the doubts of skeptics ever reached so far as to doubt this, that Christ longs with an unutterable longing for the allegiance of all men. "Do you doubt one instant," asked Phillips Brooks, "that His command is for you openly to own Him and declare before all the world that you are His servant? And have you done it?"

It is indeed absurd to refuse this public confession of Christ on the plea that you do not want to set yourself up as better than others. That is precisely what you would *not* do by confessing Christ. It is by remaining out of the church that you virtually lay claim to superior goodness. A Christian is one that acknowledges sin, his weakness, his inability to help himself, and gladly confesses Christ as his supreme, indispensable Helper. A Christian's testimony is the same as was John Newton's more than a century ago :

"If asked what of Jesus I think,
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,

Confessing Christ

I say, He's my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store
My shepherd, my husband, my friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall ;
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my all."

So overwhelming is the majority of the wisest and best that have confessed Christ thus, that the burden of proof rests upon you to show why you also should not confess Him.

And how to confess Him ?

First, by joining some branch of His Church. Without this, you will be a weak and inefficient Christian, even if you can remain a Christian at all. *Can you honestly doubt* that Christ wants you to join His Church ?

Second, this initial confession must be continued openly every day of your life. Dr. Miller tells of a young lady who had been paying a visit of several weeks at the house of friends, and then, it chancing to be communion Sabbath, had greatly surprised them by partaking of the elements. They had not supposed for a moment that she was a Christian. "It ought never to be possible," adds Dr. Miller, "for a Christian to be in any house for a day without it being known by those who see his life, even without any declaration of the fact in words, that he belongs to Christ."

For—and here is the solemn conclusion of it all—there will come a day when a word from Christ will mean more to us than all the worlds, and eternity for us will hang upon it. If we confess Him here, He will gladly confess us there. If we do not, He cannot.

If Christ Should Come To-morrow

THE Pope has a seal ring which makes his attestation on official documents. Each Pope, since the thirteenth century, has worn such a ring, and each has had his own. To prevent forgery, after every Pope's death his ring is broken to pieces with a hammer, and an entirely different one is made for his successor. How often must the aged Leo, the last Pope, as he used this ring, have thought that perhaps on the morrow it would go under the destroying hammer!

Every soul is putting its seal daily on innumerable deeds, and when we die the seal is broken. No one else can do what God wants us to do. We have no lease of the seal; it may be taken from us the next hour.

Dean Alford, that noble and brilliant English scholar, lay on his deathbed. As weeping dear ones gathered around he said cheerfully, "Put these words on my tombstone: '*Deversorium viatoris Hierosolymam proficiscentis*'—'The inn of a traveler on his way to Jerusalem.'" The cradle is such an inn, the man's body is another, the grave is a third, and they are each for a single night.

I have read of a business man who made it a pride to live in such fashion that if he should die at any night no slightest confusion or uncertainty would be discernible in his affairs by

If Christ Should Come To-Morrow

whoever came to take them up. Every document would be in its place, neatly labeled. The desk would be perfectly ordered.

Such readiness in secular affairs is to be carried over into the things of the spirit. Let us not leave matters at loose ends there. Let us cast out every least sin. Let us banish every doubt. Let us improve every talent. Let us not lie down at night till in all points we are at peace with God and man.

Much of our careless and foolish living is due to the repugnance with which we view death. We will not permit ourselves to think of it or others to talk of it. "You are so gloomy!" we cry. "Do let us converse on a more cheerful theme!"

If death is a gloomy thought to you, your life is fundamentally wrong. Death means the consummation of a Christian's highest longing, to see his Lord. It means purification from earth stains and freedom from earth clogs. Over all that was dark in death, Christ has given us the victory; and if we fear death, it is because we do not yet know Christ as we should.

Two thoughts, then, must be our constant companions, and we must attune our lives to them. One is the thought that Christ is always with us, His eye on all we do. The other is the thought that at any moment He may transfer us to the unseen land. If we become familiar with His presence, we shall not fear the transfer. We shall be glad to go anywhere with so dear a guide.

A New Year in Christ

A DEAR little girl wrote out a set of New Year's resolutions, and signed them. Asked about them a few days later, she naively replied, "I don't think they're much broken, but I guess most of 'em are cracked." Broken or cracked—and broken all to bits in the case of most of us—these New Year's resolutions have a hard time of it before the young year has gone far on his way.

But, nevertheless, we mean to make them ! We intend to take counsel of hope rather than fear. We shall believe in ourselves, because we believe in the God whose we are. Forgetting the things that are behind, with all their failures, and reaching forward to all good resolutions ahead of us, let us press toward the mark of a better year !

"It all wants forgiving," once said a Christian worker on looking back over a year's living. True of the old year of us all ; but among its other gifts the new year holds full supplies of forgiveness. New Year's Day carries in one hand a sponge to erase the old, wrong writing, and in the other hand a pencil for fresh, brave sentences.

" New mercies, new blessings, new light on the way ;
New courage, new hope, and new strength for each day ;
New wine in the chalice, new altars to raise,
New fruits for thy Master, new garments of praise ;
New gifts from His treasures, new smiles from His face ;
New streams from His fountain of infinite grace ;
New stars for thy crown, and new tokens of love ;
New gleams of the glory that waits thee above ;
New light of His countenance, full and unpriced —
All this be the joy of thy new year in Christ ! "

A New Year in Christ

Those last two words of Miss Havergal's, "in Christ," disclose the secret of the new year's joy. If your new year is "in Christ," it will be a "happy new year," its resolutions being kept. If it is not "in Christ," it will be a sad new year, for its good resolutions will be broken, since Christ alone can give us power to keep our good resolutions.

And what is it to have our new year "in Christ"? It means far more than to know about Him and believe in Him; the devils do that. It is even more than to do His will, for sometimes bad men do His will in spite of themselves. It means to love Christ. It means to make Christ the sum of our delight, the goal of our desires. It means so to draw near to Christ, and so to receive Christ to ourselves, that we two shall be verily one, He in us and we in Him. His new year, then, with all its blessedness and triumphs, will be our new year also.

"I asked the New Year for some motto sweet,
Some rule of life by which to guide my feet;
I asked and paused. He answered soft and low —
 'God's will to know.'

"Will knowledge, then, suffice, New Year?' I cried.
But ere the question into answer died
The answer came, 'Nay, this remember too —
 God's will to do.'

"Once more I asked. 'Is there still more to tell?'
And once again the answer sweetly fell,
'Yea, this one thing all other things above —
 God's will to love.'"

How to Listen

EARS, and how to use them ! That is better worth knowing than the use of the tongue, by as much as other folks are more numerous and wiser than we. It is even better worth knowing than the wise use of our eyes, since few things we see carry their own explanation or lesson on their face ; they must be interpreted. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Let him hear sermons. These preachers have given up their lives to the study and expression of the noblest of truths. We shall not get their message unless we go expecting a message, and recognizing the high character of the speakers. We shall be little profited unless we prepare our heart-soil by prayer, Bible-study, and meditation. It is as great an art to hear a sermon as to preach one.

Then, let him hear his fellow-Christians. In no school is more to be learned than in Christian conversation, but that is a hard school to find. When you do discover, however, a man whose talk breathes the spirit of Christianity, whether it uses the technical terms of theology or not, talk much with him. Though you converse only of railroad stocks, you will talk religion.

Then, let him hear what books have to say, and especially what the Bible has to say. Books are only the speech of men, in a permanent form, and in reading we are truly listening to the distant or the dead. In the first place, to choose our reading as carelessly as we do, and in the next place to read as heedlessly as we do, is almost as bad as

How to Listen

to make haphazard selection among an apothecary's stock, and swallow the first drug we light upon. Never take up a book or paper without thinking, "Is this likely to be the message the God of my brain wants it to receive?"

Finally, let him hear the Holy Spirit. God still talks to men, just as really as to Abraham or Moses or Paul. That is a tremendous thing to say, and the astonishing thing is that men assent to its truth in a matter-of-course way, and go on with lives untransformed by it. If men actually realized that by listening they could hear the voice of the Being who made them and will speedily call them to Himself, their ears would be tense with eagerness, and the clamor of the world would go by unheeded.

To close our ears resolutely and completely to the world's appeal, urging us to live for money, or power, or fame, or ease, or pleasure.

To open our ears with longing and confidence to the heavenly appeal, urging us to live for eternity, for God, for other men, for our best selves.

To close our ears to worldly threats, prophesying loss and suffering and failure if we follow high ideals, and promising success and joy if we follow ideals only a little lower.

To open our ears to absolute knowledge, disclosing the future, foretelling the judgment, describing the awards and punishments sure to come, and the just bases of each.

Finally, to open our ears to the world's great need, to allow no duty to summon us in vain and no cry for help to beat useless against us.

All this is, having ears, to hear well.

Time and Pains for Christ

THE five foolish virgins were foolish, not because of what they did, but because of what they failed to do. Their only sin, in the parable, was the sin of omission. We are likely to think of such sins as no sins at all, or at any rate as venial ones. Christ evidently teaches that they shut one out of heaven just as effectively as the open and aggressive sins.

Not to spend time for Christ! Not to take pains for Christ! Forgetting our prayers, neglecting our Bible-study, too bashful for Christian testimony, too reserved for Christian helpfulness! Of these and such as these our Master has spoken those stern and fearful words, "He that is not for me is against me—*against me.*"

Does it seem unreasonable that when we are obeying somewhat, possibly obeying a great deal, a lack of full obedience should utterly condemn us? This principle, nevertheless, seems entirely reasonable in nature and in art. If the bridge failed by only a foot to reach the pier, no one would trust himself a foot upon it. If the water falls short of the boiling point by a fraction of a degree, no one expects steam or looks to see the engine move. If the wick in the wise virgin's lamp did not dip down in the oil, though it hung as close to its surface as might be, no one would be surprised when that lamp went out. Everywhere, "a miss is as good as a mile," and lack of entire obedience means absolute failure.

Time and Pains for Christ

Since this is so, how careful should we be, how heedful of God's requirements, how eager to lavish time and pains upon His services! The swiftest promptness is none too prompt, the fullest measure of strength is none too efficient, the most ardent energy is not over-zealous.

Are we calculating with ourselves whether we have excuse enough to warrant our breaking away from that duty or this task? Then we have already broken away from it. Are we willingly persuading ourselves of our incapacity, and determinedly forgetting God's capacity? Then we are actually emptying the oil out of our lamps. Are we permitting the cares or pleasures of the world to engross our minds? Then we must not complain if we are shut in to this world and shut out from the next. The five foolish virgins were doubtless busy enough with the non-essentials, the dresses they were to wear or the garlands upon their heads. They were doing so much that they forgot to do the one thing needful.

Every year the world is growing more interesting, its politics more absorbing, its science more fascinating, its mammon more aggressive, its demands more importunate. There is ever-increasing need of mental balance, of a sane sense of proportion and of final values. Ask yourself, in regard to every demand upon your time and energy, "How long will this last? Does it lead to eternal results, or does it concern issues that, though gleaming with all iridescent hues, are transient as bubbles in the sunshine?" The world is still divided into the foolish who live for time, and the wise who live for eternity. In which company are *you*?

Growing Up for God

“IF there is one lesson more clear than another,” says Rev. D. J. H. Ward, “it is that God means for humanity a life of growth.” There is no such thing as leaping into matured powers. “There is no royal load to learning,” or to anything else. It is only through apprenticeship that one becomes master of a trade, from cobbling shoes to writing “In Memoriam.” Poets are made as well as born. So are men of noble characters and lofty deeds.

“God might have stood the cedars on the hills,
The strong night watchman by the sounding sea,
Without the tardy growth from slender spires,
To the crowned heads against the sunset fires;
But other plans had He.

“He might have placed His children on a height.
Strong men for God, His mission to fulfil,
Without the upward climb, the baffled flight,
The halting step slow mounting toward the light;
But such was not His will.

“It pleased Him that in nature, or in grace,
Seed-germ or soul, toward Him should all things
grow.
Reaching, aspiring, from beginnings small,
Till the sweet day when Christ is all in all,
And we His will shall know.”

Once a rich man was looking for an estate along the majestic Hudson River on which to build his house. Horace Greeley asked him what he was going to build. His reply was: “It depends upon three things: first, what design I get from the architects; second, what material I can

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secure with which to build it; and third, what location I can find for it."

It is just that way with a man in the building of his life. God, the great Architect, has a beautiful plan for him, and his first business is to discover what the design is. Then he has to learn to use the materials God places within his reach, and to build in the situation where God puts him. The lives that fail to grow into strong and lovely buildings are those that fail in some of these particulars.

In a sermon on growth Dr. Charles M. Sheldon had this strong sentence: "The sooner we wretched braggarts drop out of our vocabulary the word 'mine' and substitute the word 'Thine,' the sooner may we expect to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ." "Our wills are ours, to make them Thine"—I think Tennyson never wrote a wiser line than that. The secret of growth is obedience.

If we wish to "grow up for God," then, the first thing is to study the Bible, to learn God's design for us. It is drawn there in clearest and fairest lines. The next thing is to commune much with God, that His power may enter our lives, as the inspiring warmth of the sun enters the seed, which without it would lie in the ground forever, only a seed. The third thing—and the last—is to reach out, as the seed does. Reach out to the nearest material, and use it as God guides. Reach out to the nearest task, and do it as God empowers. No one ever grew except by this humble, daily, trustful duty-doing; and no one ever lived that way long without growing to be a giant!

Spirit-Filled Christians

THE most wonderful event in all the past is the incarnation. To think that "the fulness of the Godhead" could enter a contracted human life, and walk about among men! We forget God's vastness and our own littleness, or the marvel of the incarnation would be to us a perpetual astonishment.

But if the incarnation is the most wonderful event of the past, surely the most wonderful event of the present is the continuation of the incarnation in the lives of Spirit-filled Christians, Christians in whom God abides. Those hands that uphold the universe, those eyes that see all things, that mind to which all mysteries are an open book—this Power of powers is eager to enter our hands and eyes and mind, eager to guide them and give them force! It is the most blessed fact that man can know.

The Holy Spirit is ready to enter our lives with a great flood of love and energy. He is glad to "open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing." President Augustus H. Strong likens the coming of the Spirit to a rain he saw on the way from Carmel to Cæsarea. "The water seemed to descend in masses. Those exposed to it were drenched as if they had been plunged into the sea. Then I understood what the Psalmist meant by 'the river of God which is full of water.'"

The Holy Spirit is ready to fill every corner of our lives. Rev. F. B. Meyer compares His coming to the outpouring of molten metal into a mold. There is the sand made ready, hollowed

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out, dark and empty. But now the sluice-gate is opened and the glowing metal rushes out and fills with its brilliancy and its assurance of future power and usefulness every corner of the mold.

As we receive the Holy Spirit into our lives, our old evil habits fall away before Him. Dr. A. J. Gordon reminds us how some dead leaves stick fast to the branches, though all the storms of winter try to dislodge them. But when the sap begins to move in the spring, some day the leaves have all disappeared, pushed off by the swelling buds beneath. So it is with our sins as soon as we allow the life of God to course through our being.

And when we have received the Holy Spirit, at once our tasks become easy for us. A new power irradiates us, born of a new joy. James Harvey says that before he received the Spirit of God, his work was done like the shooting of an arrow; all the power came from his own puny arm. But after he received the Spirit, his work was done like the firing of a rifle-ball; he had only to direct it, while all the force for a vastly greater flight was given without his labor by the powder.

How strange that we will not take God at His word! "Lo, I am with you alway," said Christ. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Paul believed, and asked, and so received that he could exclaim triumphantly, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." If we are living weak lives, and so unhappy and unfruitful lives, we have only to yield ourselves to God, and He will transform us into all power and joy and accomplishment.

Saying "Thank You" to God

A SKILFUL surgeon, by a marvelous operation, gave sight to a young woman who had been blind from birth. On a lovely morning they opened her window shutters, and for the first time she saw this beautiful earth. "Oh, wonderful! wonderful!" she cried in rapture. "Surely heaven cannot be made more glorious than this!"

Let us ask ourselves how much we should have missed if we had been blind all our lives; and have we ever thanked God for our eyes? Or if we had been deaf all our lives; and have we ever thanked God for our hearing? Or if we had been paralytic; and have we ever thanked God for hands and feet?

Nay, is it not possible, and even probable, that the eyes of our *souls* have through all our lives been blind to more than one world of loveliness? The world of self-sacrifice—have we ever seen its azure sky, its towering mountain peaks? The world of duty, the world of generosity, the world of Bible truth, the world of prayer, the world of Christian peace—as these are named, do memories of rich prospects crowd upon our minds, visions familiar and dear yet ever changing in their enchantments? If not, pray to the Lord of Bartimæus for the unsealing of your eyes.

And how, if we have these great reasons for thanksgiving, shall we express our gratitude to God?

Saying "Thank You" to God

In the first place, by a well ordered life. Washington, in the first Thanksgiving Day proclamation, set forth this truth in his stately phrase, bidding his people "unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions; to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually." The doing of duty is the best *Te Deum*.

Then, we are to thank God by a trusting, peaceful mind. As Phillips Brooks said with reference to Thanksgiving Day, "We want to trust God with a fuller trust, and so at last to come to that high life when we shall 'be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our request be made known unto God,' for that, and that alone, is peace." By our worry, if we worry, we give the lie to our thanksgiving.

And finally, we are to thank God by words. "Never go to God for new blessings," said Joseph Parker, "before you have given Him a receipt for the old ones." We expect others to say "Thank you" if we only pass them the bread at table; and as often as we pass it. How often and how audibly do we say "Thank you" to God?

It is a minor consideration, and yet well worth thinking about: If we treated a friend's gifts as we constantly treat God's, how long would it be before our friend, in disgust, would cease his gifts altogether? And can we blame God if His gifts cease to fall upon the ungrateful?

God's Promises

ONE dark night a boat was shipwrecked on a rocky coast. One of the passengers escaped to the rocks and began to climb up the wave-beaten cliff. But as far as he went the waves pursued him, and he was afraid that the rising tide would drown him. He was in terrible despair, when suddenly his hand touched in the darkness a soft, umbrella-shaped growth. He knew at once that it was the samphire, and he cried, "Thank God, I am safe!" for he knew that the samphire does not grow except above high-water mark.

God's promises are like that samphire. They grow above the reach of any destroying wave, and when we touch one of them, though in the darkest hour and the deepest peril, we may know that we are safe.

This is because the promises have God back of them. They are valueless to one that does not believe in God, or does not believe that they come from God. If a beggar makes out a check for a million dollars, it is so much waste paper; but if Rockefeller makes out such a check, it is as good as the gold.

There is a familiar but very pointed story of a poor woman in Scotland whose son in Australia wrote to her often. "But doesn't he send you any money?" asked a visitor one day. "No, nothing; but every time he writes he puts in a

God's Promises

little picture like this." The "picture" she showed was an engraved draft for fifty dollars.

Too many of us are just like that poor woman. The Bible is, as Spurgeon called it, a "Check-book of the Bank of Faith." Every one of its many and marvelous promises is signed by the Creator and Owner of the universe. Check-books are not made to adorn a table or to furnish themes for meditation; they are made to use, to get things with. Now what use are we making—what practical use, of this infinitely rich and resourceful treasury?

There isn't much to be done—just to tear out the check and carry it on our own feet to the bank. Not much, but that little must be done, or we can draw no blessing. The reason why so many lives are barren of the good which God means for them is because they expect it to fall out of the skies with no effort on their part.

As Beecher said wittily, "God's promises were never meant to ferry our laziness like a boat; they are to be rowed by our oars."

But the most of us are like the little boy of the Jewish legend, who, while studying his Hebrew alphabet, was told that when he had learned his letters an angel would drop down on him a piece of money. Thereupon, quite forgetting the condition, the lad forsook his study, and spent his time gazing up into the skies, waiting for his money to fall!

Testifying for Christ

I SHALL always remember one little incident in connection with the London Christian Endeavor Convention of 1900. I was returning from the meetings late one night, and in the compartment was a bevy of bright English girls, a little old man being in one corner. He was a tiny, dried-up old man, and before we had gone far he began, in a thin, piping voice, to line out a hymn. Having completed a stanza, he set out to sing it, and the girls, giggling and shamed-faced, joined in. So went the second stanza and the third, until the hymn was finished.

Then the little old man, in his piping voice, began to tell his religious experience. He went back to the start, and related how he had found Christ, and what Christ had been to him all these years. By the time he was through we had reached his station, and I shall remember till my dying day the quaint picture he made, standing on the dimly lighted platform framed in by the doorway of the car, and baring his arm to show us, tattooed upon it, the words, "God is love." "I hope we may all meet up there," said he, pointing to the skies. "Good-night, young ladies," and our train moved away. The bright English lassies wore thoughtful, earnest faces. "What a dear old man!" they said to one another.

Now wasn't that fine? And doesn't it teach us all a lesson in Christian testimony? I shall be readier all my days to speak a word for my Master because of that old man's brave words.

I have learned from him that my testimony

Testifying for Christ

must be after my fashion. I couldn't do what he did. I should be ridiculous and not impressive. But neither could he testify in my way. And I have a way.

He taught me to vary my ways of testifying. In those brief minutes he testified by song, by the telling of experience, by a picture, by a gesture. God wants ingenious Christians.

He taught me also that testimony must be "out of season" as well "as in season." Indeed, testimony "out of season" often turns out to be the most seasonable kind of testimony.

He taught me that testimony must be personal. It must spring from life, if it is to reach lives.

At the same time he taught me that this personal testimony must be very humble. It was farthest from our thoughts that the old man was advertising himself. A man was persuaded by an ardent admirer of Spurgeon to go to hear the great preacher. When asked the next morning, "What did you think of him?" the man replied, "Nothing at all." "Nothing at all? Why, what do you mean?" The answer came with tears in the eyes: "I was not thinking at all of the preacher; I was thinking of the preacher's Christ."

Finally, I learned that testimony must be sincere. As bells are spoiled by the slightest foreign element in the bell-metal, so no testimony rings true with the slightest admixture of self-seeking, exaggeration, or hypocrisy.

Speech is the noblest power of man, and to speak of Christ is the noblest kind of speech. May Christ add grace to our lips and courage to our hearts!

The Evil of Envy

So common a sin is envy that few have the grace to be ashamed of it. "I envy him that fine house," we say, lightly, as if we were not confessing a sin.

How seldom do we meet a man or a woman that really rejoices in another's joy, exults in his advancement, feels satisfaction in his increased possessions! "I used to go to school with her, and no one thought her smart. Now she has written that silly book, see what airs she puts on, and how people make much of her. Pah!" "They were our neighbors, back in the '70s, before he made that lucky strike with the street-car motor. And now look at their stone house and their servants! What have they done to deserve it?" That is the ordinary tenor of word and thought.

Have you ever considered that the Golden Rule requires a sympathy and reciprocity in gladness as well as in kindness? Your enjoyment is spoiled if others look sourly at your gain; dare you look sourly at the gain of others?

There is much talk about the brotherhood of man. You do not believe it, however much you preach it, unless you practice the brotherhood of enjoyment. If you are not pleased with another's pleasure, if you cannot see a man riding out with his family and say in your heart, "God bless you, brother, and give you a happy ride," but must rather ask, "Why should my wife and I trudge afoot while they are rolled along on rubber tires?" then the brotherhood of man is to you only an empty name.

The Evil of Envy

“What a wretched and apostate state is this!” cries Addison. “To be offended with excellence, and to hate a man because we approve him! The condition of the envious man is most emphatically miserable; he is not only incapable of rejoicing in another’s merit or success, but lives in a world wherein all mankind are in a plot against his quiet, studying their own happiness and advantage.”

Not only does the envious man fail to know other men and sympathize with them, but he fails to know himself. As Gay sings :

“Canst thou discern another’s mind ?
What is ’t you envy? Envy’s blind.
Tell Envy, when she would annoy,
That thousands want what you enjoy.”

Some men are so busy counting their neighbor’s hens that they can’t gather their own eggs.

But worse than the envious man’s failure to know and enjoy both his own fortune and that of others is his failure to know and rejoice in God. All discontent, all envy, is treason to Providence. There would speedily be an end to envy if Christians would only make their own these noble thoughts of Francis Quarles :

“In having all things, and not Thee, what have I ?
Not having Thee, what have my labors got ?
Let me enjoy but Thee, what further crave I ?
And having Thee alone, what have I not ?
I wish nor sea nor land ; nor would I be
Possessed of heaven, heaven unpossessed of Thee.”

Ministering to Christ

MANY delightful legends represent poor travelers begging alms or other aid, and when it is given, or refused, the beggar suddenly flashes out into the beauty and majesty of Christ, the divine Rewarder or Punisher. These stories, however, add nothing to Christ's simple statement that in every ministration to the needy we are ministering to Him. In a passage of marvelous power over human hearts, in words that would be the height of impudent blasphemy were not Christ divine, He sets before men as their loftiest motive for clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, comforting the desolate, the truth that these good deeds are actually done to Him.

The pathos of the thought is irresistible, when once we understand it. To realize that the strong Saviour, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, is Himself none the less in need of ministrations! That He is hungry wherever one of His children is starving, that He wanders lonely in the person of every outcast, that He languishes in every prison cell. What religion other than Christianity has given us such a conception of God; and does not every heart at once respond to it as true?

But it is very hard to realize. When Christians come to realize it, they will transform the world in one burst of love and sorrow and repentance. Alas, for our sense-beclouded vision! If we could see Christ walking into our house, as He passed over that threshold at Bethany, how we would lavish our best upon Him, and long to have it better! Yet in the form of many a beggar we have verily turned Him from our doors.

Ministering to Christ

Why does He not manifest Himself unmistakably? Why does He not clothe every poor man, every prisoner, every son of sorrow, sin, and suffering with His own transfigured garments of light? Because He wants us to believe Him, in our hearts and not merely with our eyes. Because He wants us to walk by faith and not by sight. Because He wants us to live in the spirit, and so prepare ourselves for the spiritual world to come. Should He cheat us of that indispensable training in order to spare our imaginations and our faith a little exercise?

Does this teaching mean that we are to give to every beggar, regardless of whether the gift would do him harm or good? Of course not. It simply means that Christ is in him, that we are to recognize Christ's claim through him, and that we owe to that unworthy beggar whatever time, strength, money, love, may develop the Christ-spirit within him, may make him a happy, prosperous, pure man again. That is what Christ would do, and that is what we must do, ministering to Him, and in His stead and power.

Do we not all need to pray Miss Havergal's prayer?

“O lead me, Lord, that I may lead
The wandering and the wavering feet;
O feed me, Lord, that I may feed
My hungering ones with manna sweet.

“O strengthen me, that while I stand
Firm on the rock, and strong in Thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers with the troubled sea.”

Reverence for Sacred Things

I HAVE seen amid the solemn shrines of Westminster Abbey, and under the majestic arches of Ely or Lincoln cathedrals, as irreverent conduct as ever in a wooden church with its bare walls and plain glass windows. Reverence is not born of place, but of grace. A truly religious man forms his cathedral from within. Reverence is an attitude of mind, not of body ; and a man is irreverent, however punctiliously he bows his head in prayer, if that head is busied with his bank account or his invoices.

Reverence cannot be manufactured. It is a result of something else, an inevitable result ; and if that cause of it is obtained, we need take no thought for the reverence. That cause is a knowledge of God.

First, know God as the Almighty. Who has not bowed his soul in awe under the vast sweep of the midnight heavens? Who does not kneel at the thought of infinite space, grasped in God's infinite arms? Who has not worshiped that ilimitable might, the outreachings of whose power uphold alike the lordliest sun and the slightest gnat that floats on a summer breeze? And we can plant the stars in any daily task, so that, going about our common work, we shall tread softly as on holy ground, knowing that we are in the presence of the Most High.

Second, know God as the All-wise. Have you ever met disaster when you let Him plan your

Reverence for Sacred Things

life? Has the wisest man ever suggested an improvement on any law of nature? Through all the intricate course of the seasons is there any failure of His understanding? One could spend a lifetime in the study of a dandelion, and not master half its secrets. Only a shallow head can remain unbent in the presence of even the lowest specimen of the divine handiwork.

Third (and last, for a complete list is impossible), know God as All-loving. Nothing human inspires so much reverence as a tender, self-sacrificing mother. She is the summit of creation. But God's self-sacrifice, God's tenderness, God's passion of loving service, is the source of hers, constantly sustains it, and far surpasses it. His love is unsearchable. His forgiveness is marvelous. When I think of it, I am in church.

When our hearts have come to know God in this way, we shall have no doubt as to what things are sacred, and reverence for them will be instinctive. We shall need no Sabbath rules, but shall rise daily to a Lord's day. We shall need no stint in Bible-reading, but shall always be hungry for it. We shall need no rules of conduct in God's house, for we shall really meet God there. And our whole life will pray this prayer of Robert Montgomery's:

"Eternal Spirit! grant
The wisdom meek, that lives on truth divine
However veiled. A waiting mind impart,
And in our weakness show our strength to dwell,
Like as of old the pensive Mary sat
Low at His feet, and listened to her Lord;
Absorbed and self-renouncing, be our soul
Before the cross in docile reverence bent."

How to Enter Christ's Family

I KNOW a family that is selfish, cold and distant toward its relatives, evidently desiring "its sisters, its cousins, and its aunts" merely to leave it alone. And I know another family whose delight is in the family tree to its vaguest branches and most remote twigs, a family wherein a fifth cousin is most welcome, while a "first cousin once removed" is cause for a month's rejoicing. These two families are types of two different ways of regarding Christ. One is abstract, philosophical, matter of fact; the other is intimate, personal, loving. The first speaks of Christ's "dispensation," the second speaks of His "family."

There is no doubt which of these ways of looking at the matter is most Christian. The Bible delights in picturing Christ as our Elder Brother, in painting the warm rooms of our Father's house, in representing us as sons of God. There is much talk about a kingdom, to be sure, but this Kingdom of God is within us, not coldly exterior. Our Father would have us at home with Him.

No one can make any study of other religions without seeing how foreign this thought is to all of them. Their God is on top of Olympus, or he is in Nirvana, or he is up in the inaccessible sky. If he comes among men, it is only as a surprise and a portent. The family hearth, the Father's knee and open arms, the household at-

How to Enter Christ's Family

mosphere—you may search all religions but Christianity, and you will never find them.

But do Christians always find them? Alas, no! For there is a pagan way of taking Christianity, as well as a pagan way of taking everything else. It is easy to think of God as afar off, to forget His omnipresence, to forget that He is acquainted with all our ways, to disregard Christ's revelation of the Father as entering our Nazareth workshops and our Jericho dining-rooms and our Bethany kitchens. And it avails little to have the Christian conception of a loving, forgiving God if we are going to thrust Him off on top of a snowy Olympus.

How to enter Christ's family, then? The way is very simple. It is to get close to God, as Christ did. It is to seek above everything else to know God's will. Knowing it, it is to seek above everything else to do it. Doing it, it is to become acquainted with God and a friend of Christ. In tender phrase our beloved Whittier has depicted the beautiful relationship we then enter :

“ We may not climb the heavenly steps
To bring the Lord Christ down :
In vain we search the lowest deeps,
For Him no depths can drown.

“ The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain ;
We touch Him in life's throng and press,
And we are whole again.

“ Our Friend, our Brother, and our Lord,
What may Thy service be ?
Nor name, nor form, nor ritual word,
But simply following Thee.”

That Which Comes First

THAT quaint old divine, Matthew Henry, once wrote sententiously, "He who buys goods has paper and twine thrown in." How slow are men to learn that the greater includes the less ! Marry the heir apparent, and you need not worry about your coronet. Few of the sayings of Christ handed down outside the Bible are authentic, but this at least, quoted by Origen, has all the marks of a Christly authorship : "Ask great things, little things shall be added to you ; ask heavenly things, and earthly things shall be added to you."

In Professor Drummond's capital address to boys, entitled "First !" he compared religion to a ship's helm. "Suppose you take the helm out of a ship and hang it over the bow, and send that ship to sea ; will it ever reach the other side ? Certainly not. It will drift about anyhow. Keep religion in its place, and it will take you straight through life, and straight to your Father in heaven when life is over." And the place of religion is always—*first*.

How can we tell whether we are putting religion first ? Chiefly by our desires and ambitions. There is something we earnestly want, but we feel that God does not want us to have it, or we strive for it long in vain. Now, can we give up our own will and cheerfully accept God's ? Can we enter into the spirit of Saxe Holm's noble poem, and say :

"Now, Lord, I leave at Thy loved feet
This thing which looks so near, so sweet ;

That Which Comes First

I will not seek, I will not long,
I almost fear I have been wrong.

“I'll go and work the harder, Lord,
And wait till by some loud, clear word
Thou callest me to Thy loved feet
To take this thing so dear, so sweet.”

If we can say this, and mean it, we are putting “first things first,” we are praying the Lord's Prayer, “Thy will be done.”

And whoever puts first things first will find that second things and third things, and all the rest of them to infinity, will come along of their own accord. It is like building a twenty-story building. For weeks there is no progress, only a hole in the ground, only incessant driving of piles, and pouring of cement, and laying of great stones thirty or forty feet below the surface. Half the work is done, builders say, when an adequate foundation is completed. After that, the walls rise as if in a day. But if the foundation did not extend to bedrock or its equivalent, the twenty-stories would collapse more rapidly than they rose.

And so Christ's demands upon us seem like underground work, negative work, work that does not count. It is subtraction, not addition; giving up, not gaining; an emptied life, a surrendered life, a hole in the ground. Yes, that is the first; just as the recruit's first step is the surrender of his personal will, that he may be incorporated in the grand will of the army. Seek first the Kingdom, and yield yourself to it; then—the crown on your head. You have become a king!

Choosing a Hard Thing

THAT fine old hero, Caleb, in his plucky choice, at his advanced age, of the portion of the Promised Land the most difficult to conquer, has stiffened many a weak backbone through all the ages since. For one thing, the vigorous old man has taught us the value of a stout body. "Believe me," says Bishop Potter, "there is no nobler work—no diviner work—than the work which teaches a young man a reverent care for his own body, and a scrupulous and tender regard for those divinely instituted laws of health which shall make that body more and more a weapon for God and for good." Caleb had not allowed this weapon to grow rusty.

Secondly, Caleb teaches us that difficulties are things to be welcomed, not avoided. "Many men," declared Spurgeon, "owe the grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties." This is because power that is not used becomes useless, just as muscle becomes flabby that is not often stretched against heavy weights. Phillips Brooks wisely said, "Every day the power that we will not use is falling from us."

For this combat with difficulties must be an every-day fight. Caleb must have been doing hard things all his life, or he would not have been able thus magnificently to do a hard thing in his old age. As Anna Temple sings :

"The present moment is divinely sent :
The present duty is thy Master's will.
O thou who longest for some noble work,

Choosing a Hard Thing

Do thou this hour thy given task fulfil!
And thou shalt find, though small at first it seemed,
It is the work of which thou oft hast dreamed."

Undertaking these hard things, day after day, we find them constantly growing less difficult. Ruskin, indeed, asserts that "if a great thing can be done at all, it can be done easily. But it is that kind of ease with which a tree blossoms after long years of gathering strength." Caleb conquered Hebron with comparative ease, but only because he had been conquering Hebrons all his life.

This is not to say that his courageous campaign was without peril. There would have been no glory had there been no danger. One of old Plutarch's sage maxims is this: "To do an evil action is base; to do a good action, without incurring danger, is common enough; but it is the part of a good man to do great and noble deeds, though he risks everything."

But we can venture all things, because we have all strength to aid us. To use the brave words of Mrs. Charles: "We are never without help. We have no right to say of any good work, It is too hard for me to do; or of any sorrow, It is too hard for me to bear; or of any sinful habit, It is too hard for me to overcome." If we have Caleb's sense of an ever-present God, who is our omnipotent Comrade in every battle, what foe shall we fear to face, what difficulty may we not overcome?

Tempted and Tried

ONE day, after Wendell Phillips, then in his youth, had heard Lyman Beecher preach, he went to his room, threw himself on the floor, and cried, "Oh, God, I belong to Thee! Take what is Thine own. I ask this, that whenever a thing be wrong it may have no power of temptation over me, and whenever a thing be right it may take no courage to do it." His prayer was heard, and in the strength of it he conquered without a struggle all the temptations of wealth and popularity, and became the Cœur de Lion of American reforms. His experience illustrates one secret of the mastery of temptation: Dedicate yourself, in all sincerity and completeness, to the service of God.

A second rule, following hard on the first, is this: Keep your mind fixed on Christ, who, having met all our temptations, can alone save us from them. A man asked an Eastern king how to avoid temptation. The king sternly commanded him to carry through the city a vessel brimful of oil. Two swordsmen walked behind, ready to cut off his head if he spilled a drop. The streets were crowded as he passed through, for a great fair was in progress, but when the man returned to the king, not having spilled a drop of oil, and the king asked him if he had seen any one in the course of his walk, the man replied that he had seen no one, his mind was so intent on his hazardous task. "Thus," said the wise king, "keep your mind intent on God, and you will receive no temptation."

The third rule is, If you do meet temptation,

Tempted and Tried

resist it with bold and fierce decision. Imitate that Mississippi steamer's captain during the American Civil War, who was under strict orders to carry no cotton. At a certain landing a planter came on board and offered him \$10,000 if he would take his cotton to New Orleans. The planter was refused, and raised his offer to \$20,000, then to \$30,000, and so on, till he reached the sum of \$100,000. At this the captain fiercely pointed a revolver at the tempter's head, shouting, "Get off this boat, instantly! You're getting too close to me."

We must surround ourselves with all exterior aids toward this conquest of temptation, filling our lives with wise reading, strong friendships, and hard work. Thackeray applied this principle once. When given an engraving of "St. George and the Dragon," he declared that he would place it at the head of his bed, where it would remind him constantly of the two dragons he had to fight, indolence and luxury. Let us imitate the hero of Mary Higginson's fine sonnet:

" We wondered why he always turned aside
When mirth and gladness filled the brimming days ;
Who else so fit as he for pleasure's ways ?
Men thought him frozen by a selfish pride ;
But that his voice was music none denied,
Or that his smile was like the sun's warm rays.
One day upon the sands he spoke in praise
Of swimmers who were buffeting the tide :
'The swelling waves of life they dare to meet.
I may not plunge where others safely go.
Unbidden longings in my pulses beat.'
O blind and thoughtless world ! you little know
That ever round this hero's steadfast feet
Surges and tugs the dreaded undertow."

Our Simple Duty

AN "unprofitable servant" is one that makes no profit for his master. He may "earn his keep," but nothing more. He is not putting money, time, strength, out at interest for his master, like the wise servants in Christ's better-known parable.

It is the extras that count; gifts that are more than our share, deeds that are more than our duty. No one can please God that is all the time asking, "How much must I do?" To be a profitable servant he should continually ask, "What more may I do?" Like Carey, he must "attempt great things for God, expect great things from God."

A Christian is an unprofitable servant, merely earning his board and hardly that, if his religious life occupies itself with the receptive side of religion, or the purely formal. Church-going is not "service;" it is getting strength for service. The proper prayer meeting is not Christian work; it is for conference regarding Christian work with one another and with God. Bible-reading, private devotions, which so many Christians make so much of a duty, is no more duty-doing than would be a lover's reading of a letter from a lover, or the talk of the two together. When such things are magnified into tasks, something is radically wrong with religion. They are not outgoings, they are all income; they are not exercise, they are feeding.

Do I imply that little Christian work is done?

Our Simple Duty

Yes, very little in comparison with what we think we are doing and what we ought to do. Churches with no conversions during the year are too common, missionary boards in debt are too common, to render this truth other than sadly evident. The progress of Christianity—for Christianity *is* progressing and gloriously—is won by the few and not by the many. If all had been at work, Christ would long before this have conquered the world.

What, then, in order to be profitable servants, are some of the things we should be doing, in addition to eating at the Lord's rich table of spiritual food ?

We should be going out into the "highways and hedges," and bidding to our feast the poor, the halt, and the blind. We should be compelling them to come in. We should be healing, not those already well, but the sick. We should be seeking, not the lambs in the fold, but those lost on the hillside. No one that is not a missionary Christian escapes the condemnation of being an unprofitable servant.

I do not mean that we must leave home, though God wants some to do that. Home is a fearful place when Christ is calling us over in Macedonia. But He is calling many of us in our homes. The girl in the kitchen does not know Christ. The postman is an unbeliever. Your own brother is serving mammon and not God.

"Be thy best thoughts to work divine addressed ;
Do something—do it soon—with all thy might.
An angel's wing would droop if long at rest,
And God, Himself, inactive, were no longer blessed."

The Broad Way: the Narrow Way

CHRIST, we may be sure, does not want to make the Christian life a hard life. He wants as many as possible to get to heaven, and to have as easy a time as possible on the road. He is not like the Pharisees, loading upon us heavy burdens that He will not touch even with the finger of sympathy.

And yet of necessity it is true that the reality of our Christian life is largely to be measured by its difficulty ; and the harder time we are having the more likely is it that we are following Christ. This is because Christ is climbing mountains, while other leaders are treading the valley paths. This is because Christ is on the frontier, while other leaders are back among the parlors. This is because Christ's ship is on the sea in the midst of the storm, while other captains are eating apples by the fireside.

"Woe unto you," said Christ, "when all men speak well of you." Friendship is not an evil —of course He did not mean that ; but it is an evil to have some men for friends. No one can do his duty without having some men for enemies. On a mission field, when Christianity becomes fashionable, the missionaries tremble. "Rice Christians" become fashionable also.

No, we must "take up our cross," if we would follow Him. We must be "crucified with Christ," if we would rise into His glory. We are not to seek martyrdom for its own sake or sacrifice for its own sake, any more than Christ

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did ; but if we do Christ's work, fearlessly and thoroughly, the sacrifice, the martyrdom—to some extent, at least—are inevitable.

Paul indicated one negative of importance when he said that if meat made his brother stumble he would eat no meat while the world stands. The Christian's road is sadly narrowed by the weaknesses and temptations of those that are not Christians. We must forego many a practice and pleasure that we might enjoy if all the world were Christ's. But shall we not rejoice in the narrowness of the way, since He walks in it with us?

The giving up of idolatrous meat, however, is a small matter after one has been imprisoned, scourged, stoned. The bother Christians make about "doubtful amusements" and the like, is a sad commentary on their active piety. If a man is out in the storm looking for a lost brother he does not stop to think of the chestnuts he might be roasting by the fire.

Of course, it is not pleasant to see how broad and smooth the worldling's way is, how full of beauty to the senses, while ours is harsh underneath, swept by rough winds, confined by strict, bare walls. But the end of our way is heaven, of his is hell. And the Companion on our way is Christ. Shall we not hourly sing, with the heroic Zinzendorf :

" Jesus, still lead on,
Till our rest be won!
And although the way be cheerless,
We will follow, calm and fearless;
Guide us by Thy Hand
To our fatherland!"

Tares in Your Field

THERE was current in ancient times a parable which is beautifully parallel to our Lord's story of the tares. A seer is shown a forest of leafless trees and bidden to point out which boughs are dead and which are alive. Of course, he is unable to do this. Later, he is shown the same trees after spring has worked its miracle of foliage, and now he can distinguish at a glance the live boughs from the dead ones. So it is with men's lives. It is hard, often impossible, for us to separate in this world the evil from the good; but in the summer-land above, where all souls blossom in the sunshine of perfect joy, life will prove itself superbly, and death will go to its own place.

The parable is aimed at the would-be classifiers, who are constantly breaking Christ's command, "Judge not." They are always for plucking out motes. No one is right but they and Brother John, and they have their suspicions of Brother John. The whip of small cords is their Christian symbol, and they cleanse the temple daily and hourly. They want to weed out the tares, and they pull up three wheat stalks for every weed. Christ's parable teaches wiser farming.

But though the parable thus applies chiefly to groups of Christians, we are right in applying it also, as it always is applied, to the individual Christian life. How about the tares in the fields of our souls?

Tares in Your Field

The devil sows them ; yes, but he wouldn't get far over the field if we didn't help him.

We help him by carelessness regarding our seed supply. A little care of the seed saves great care of the field. Did you ever seriously examine the influences you permit to touch your life, classify them honestly into good and evil and doubtful? We would not put poison into our mouths, but we readily put it into our ears. We would not pour vitriol over our faces, but we unhesitatingly pour spiritual vitriol into our eyes. We shun a house with the yellow flag, but we open our minds to germs worse than the most virulent smallpox.

If at the end of an ordinary day we could see our soul-gardens under some physical guise, what would we observe? The nightshade of a licentious novel has sprung up, borne fruit, scattered seed, and a thousand deadly plants are making the garden pestiferous. The nettle of a malicious slander has vied with the nightshade in fecundity. That thick-lipped purslane, covetousness, getting a start from a tiny seed among the pansies, has crept over all the richest parts of the garden.

Ah, what help we need, to keep the garden of our souls! You will remember that Mary, on the first Easter morning, thought Christ to be the gardener. Let Him be the Gardener. He alone can guard the gate, by night and day, and keep out the enemy. He alone can purify the seed and bring it safely and luxuriantly to maturity. He alone can remove the tares already there and keep us from new tares for evermore.

The Great Surrender

THAT humorous philosopher, Robert J. Burdette, pictures somewhere the man that has the tinkering habit. "Where he should rip off a rotting roof from ridge to cornice, he will stick in a shingle, a piece of slate, a scrap of tin, amid ever-increasing leaks, dry rot, and general decay. He braces and bolsters and patches walls and fences until his farm looks as though it had a combination of Saint Vitus' dance and delirium tremens." And that is what lots of us are doing with our lives, trying to patch them up, when what they need is tearing down and rebuilding.

How often in the city I see the exhilarating process! Down it comes, a four or five story building, of costly marble, like as not. Sculptured ornaments, polished pillars, carved woodwork, great plate-glass windows—they are all carted away. Even the cellar is pulled out, like the root of a decayed tooth. Not a partition is left to mark the plan of the old building. And then, deeper and deeper, the earth is hollowed out two or three stories below the surface. Piles are driven. Great masses of concrete are poured in. For the new building is to rise ten, twenty, perhaps thirty stories into the air! A new, splendid plan. Fresh, solid, beautiful materials. Deeper, higher, broader. That is the way men build in the material world.

Oh, for courage to build thus in the spiritual world! Put away the old man. Put on the new man.

Bishop Whipple told of an Indian that did it. He was a terrible and famous warrior, but he

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came to lay his tomahawk at the feet of Christ. To test him, the missionary said, "Let me cut your hair." The Indian's scalplock is for his enemy to grasp—if he can. To allow it to be cut means squawdom. "Yes," said the Indian, "I am in earnest; if I can be a follower of Jesus Christ, I can suffer anything." So the missionary cut off the symbolic lock. The warrior was almost frenzied by the jeers that followed, but he stood his ground like a hero; he had made the great surrender.

Now that is precisely what Christ wants us to do: first, to be His in our hearts, through and through; then, to be willing and eager to show ourselves His before men.

"Surrender," after all, is hardly the word for it; that involves a suspicion of disgrace, an indication of failure. Really, to become Christ's is to begin for the first time to succeed. It is the greatest honor that could possibly come to one. It is as when a warrior kneels before his sovereign and rises a knight. It is as when a midshipman is made admiral of a fleet of battleships. No comparison can indicate the glory of the alliance we enter into when we become Christ's.

For that is only half of it. When we become Christ's, Christ becomes ours. He was ours before, in the sense that He longed for us, and did for us what we would let Him; but now all barriers are down, and we have free access to His infinite stores of power and wisdom and joy. That means an instant enabling and enriching of our life beyond our wildest dreams, and a continual progress in power and bliss through the endless reaches of eternity.

What is Practical Christianity?

PRACTICAL Christianity is the religion of doing things; spiritual Christianity is the religion of believing things. At first glance there seems to be a wide difference between these two, but there is not. Practical Christianity is eminently spiritual and spiritual Christianity is eminently practical.

The letter by James has been called "the Gospel of common sense." Luther, with his enthusiasm for his recovered doctrine of justification by faith, called it "an epistle of straw," and wanted to drop it from the New Testament. But Luther should have learned better from his favorite Epistle to the Romans, in whose twelfth chapter he would have found as plain directions for practical Christianity as anywhere in James.

It is so easy to run to extremes! Men get the great thought of the beauty of holiness, and at once they become, essentially, modern monks and nuns. They think that "pray without ceasing" means continually to contemplate heaven and avoid contact with earthly affairs. They live for their Bibles, and for communion with God.

Other men, of the bustling kind, scorn all this. They ridicule prayer meetings as "talk, talk, nothing but talk." They urge Christians to "do something." "Pray with ministering hands," they urge, "and with feet that are swift on errands of mercy."

Now, the fact that both of these views of life are true, and each only a half truth, makes each actually a dangerous view. There is no safety

What is Practical Christianity?

except in Christ's way, and Christ's way was neither of these, but lay between the two. Christ had His Mount of Transfiguration, but He refused to stay there. He knew that sick ones were waiting to be healed on the plain below.

When David Livingstone was a boy he received from his dying Sunday-school teacher some advice that he never forgot. It was this: "Lad, make religion the every-day business of your life." That is what every missionary must do.

A little Jewish girl in Palestine had heard two missionary ladies described as people who lived "near the Lord." Misunderstanding the words, one day when she had been sent to them to ask them to visit and pray with a sick person, she said, "I've been to see the two ladies who live *next door to God.*" That familiar, neighborly conception of religion is just the right one.

Thackeray once said: "'Tis not the dying for a faith that's so hard—some man of every nation has done that: 'tis the living up to it that is so difficult." And Herrick asks and answers:

"Is this a fast, to keep
The larder lean
And clean
From fat of veales and sheep?

"No; 'tis a fast to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat,
And meat,
Unto the hungry soul."

Let us not satisfy ourselves with a religion of our own fireside and dining table. We are to go forth, wherever the hungry are; and we are not only to invite them to our full feast, but we are to compel them to come in.

The Abundant Life

A LARGE book has been written to prove that the Creator gives each man at birth a certain definite amount of vigor, the capacity for just so much movement of body and exercise of brain. Every day's living draws on this store, and the reservoir is never filled up. When the supply is exhausted, the man dies.

According to this absurd theory, the more a man exercises the less strength he has ; the only way to live long is to live sluggishly, making as little demands upon one's self as possible.

Every man's experience contradicts that theory. We all know that our stock of vitality and of energy may be increased. We all know, for example, that the man that exercises regularly and sensibly, not only has a stronger body while he lives, but is likely to live many years longer than without exercise. We all know that if we use our minds actively we not only live to more purpose while we live, but our lives are thereby extended.

Now there are two ways of seeking this abundant life. One is false and futile, the other is true and successful. One is the world's way, the other is Christ's way.

There is a story of an Eastern king who was told by an oracle that he had only twelve years more to live. At once he began to try to outwit the oracle. He surrounded himself with every luxury. He made his life a marvel of pleasurable experiences. He lighted his vast estates so bril-

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liantly that they shone as brightly by night as by day. Whenever he was awake his servants were ready to urge forward the current of his joys. Thus he thought to cheat the oracle, and crowd twenty-four years of life into twelve. But the wise oracle was not to be cheated, for he died in *six* years.

But if the foolish monarch had tried in another way, he might have lived the more abundant life. He tried the world's way, the way of getting; he should have tried Christ's way, the way of giving. Our Lord lived for others more than any one else has ever lived. His was a life of only thirty-three years, but did even Methuselah live as long?

The only way for the lamp to get more life is by radiating more light, sure that the oil will be replenished in the wick as the light is given out. The only way for the fire to get more life is by giving out more heat. The only way for the music to get more life is by pulsing forth a more stirring harmony. The only way for the fruit to get more life is by storing up more sweetness for men. And the only way for men to get more life is by using for others the life they already have. As Lucy Larcom sung :—

“ We need, each and all, to be needed,
To feel we have something to give
Toward soothing the moan of earth's hunger ;
And we know that then only we live
When we feed one another, as we have been fed,
From the Hand that gives body and spirit their bread.”

Are we growing in power to do this? That is the great question for each one of us.

Growing in Grace

“THE Bible compares our souls to trees,” says Charles Kingsley, “not out of a mere pretty fancy of poetry, but for a great, awful, deep, world-wide lesson, that every tree in the fields may be a pattern, a warning, to us thoughtless men, that as that tree is meant to grow, so our souls are meant to grow. As that tree dies unless it grows, so our souls must die unless they grow. Consider that.”

Scarcely is there a more important question, after the one great question, “Have you entered the Christian life?” than this: “Are you *growing* in it?” To this question many sullenly answer, “I am made as I am made; how can I change it?” Dean Stanley replies wisely in one of his sermons: “We are sometimes inclined to think that our characters, once formed, can never change. This is not true; at least, it is only half true. Our natural dispositions, our natural faculties, these do very rarely change; but the direction that they take can be changed.” The oak-sapling must remain an oak and the rose-shoot must remain a rose; but they may grow into a mighty oak, a bower of roses, or they may become only a stunted tree, a barren bush.

A tree, as Kingsley goes on to say, grows in two ways. Its roots gather strength from the soil, its leaves from the air. Strip it of its leaves, and, though it is rooted in the richest soil, it will die. Cut its roots in two, and though the fertile

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air of the tropics breathe around it, death will speedily come. So must our human growth be fed by earth and heaven, by friends and books and health and material gifts, by prayer and Bible and the strengthening presence of God. A wise Christian will reach out all the faculties of his nature, seeking from all sources the materials of his growth.

Every one has made already some beginnings of a noble character; and, as Thomas Brooks says, "There is no such way to attain to greater measures of grace, as for a man to live up to the little grace he has." Do the good you know how to do, and you will soon know how to do more good.

A gracious character is not to be won without indomitable patience. Sin leaps up defiant, again and again. Failures daunt us and temptations allure. We must bear with our blundering selves. We must look hopefully forward, and not backward in despair. No tree can grow *perceptibly*. Let it be enough if it can show a bud here, a new leaf there. Hear Susan Coolidge's lovely words :

" How does the soul grow? Not all in a minute ;
Now it may lose ground, and now it may win it ;
Now it resolves, and again the will faileth ;
Now it rejoiceth, and now it bewaileth ;
Now its hopes fructify, then they are blighted ;
Now it walks sunnily, now gropes benighted ;
Fed by discouragements, taught by disaster,
So it goes forward, now slower. now faster,
Till, all the pain past, and the failures made whole,
It is full grown, and the Lord rules the soul."

Cumberers of the Ground

IF a plant does not make good use of the ground it occupies, it very soon ceases to occupy it; it dies. Nature is a woman after Henry George's own heart. She will have no idle land. "Use the soil, or leave it to plants that will use it!" is her stern command. If roots will not draw in nurture, if trunk will not thrust out new layers of girth, if branches will not push forth their beautiful bewilderment of green, the writ of evictment is speedily issued, and a rotten log enriches the earth for its more faithful successor.

Ground is as valuable among men. I have in mind a certain important corner in Boston where a handsome, though small shop has been tenanted by a number of firms in swift succession, each abandoning the expensive place because he could not do business enough to pay rent. "He has the position, but can he hold it?" is often asked regarding situations with mercantile firms. "Possession" is not "nine points" or even one point in favor of the incompetent holder of a business post. If he does not "fill the bill" he must not "fill the place."

Now isn't it strange that none of these considerations occur to many that have joined Christ's church, and therefore have agreed to "be about their Father's business"? Is not their position safe, forsooth? Will any one remove the children of the King? Are they not church-members "for good," whether they are "any good at it" or not?

Cumberers of the Ground

Ah, let all Christians take to heart Christ's parable of the talents, and especially the fate of the napkin man! "Thou hast left thy first love," said Christ to the Ephesians. "Repent, do better, else I will remove thy candlestick out of its place"; that is, dismiss them from their post.

"Our Father's business" has no room for sluggards. "The King's business requireth haste." There is the whole world to be reached, every creature to be helped. The gospel train must always run express, the gospel ship hold the record.

Paint in your mind two pictures: on the one hand, the sins heaven-high, the greeds, ambitions, infidelities, and hatreds of men, the wars, the strikes, the poverty, the saloons, the places of shame, and all these raging against Christ and tearing His kingdom; and on the other hand, paint the first Christian you are likely to meet, who thinks himself overworked with listening to sermons, and attending one committee meeting a month, and hunting up a new alto for the choir! Is it not strange that God has such patience with us as He has?

He will give all of us a fresh chance—you, if you have been a cumberer of the ground, a barren fig-tree. He will loosen the ground, that has become sermon-hardened; possibly He will loosen it with the sharp plough of sorrow. He will enrich it with new truths and inspirations, though heaven knows you have truths enough already. He will try you again. And this time you will bring forth fruit.

How Can I Know That I am Saved?

PROBABLY the excuse most commonly made for not joining the church is, "I am not good enough." No excuse is more foolish. The church was established precisely for those that are "not good enough." "The glory of the gospel is this," says Meyer, "that God comes to the unfit, to the marred and spoiled." To know you are saved is, in the very first place, to know yourself to be, not a saint, but a sinner.

Some think they cannot be saved till they have experienced certain unusual and startling sensations. Some one said to Spurgeon once, "Sir, I was quite sure I was saved, for I felt so light." "Poor simpleton," was the great preacher's comment, "what does it matter whether you felt light or heavy? Perhaps you were light-headed, or half out of your mind with excitement."

Indeed, we need not consider at all how we *feel* in the matter. "There are three things," says Meyer: "feeling, faith, and fact. You must change, and put them thus: fact, faith—and feeling a hundred years after, if you like."

Again, we need not consider our *opinions* in this matter of our salvation. Major Whittle said once that in the time of Noah there were those who, as the rain began to fall, had firm belief that the hills would be as safe for them as the ark; but their opinion did not change the fact, or make them safe on the hills. The ques-

How Can I Know That I am Saved?

tion is not, "What mode of salvation does my mind approve?" but "How does God really save men?"

The Indian that Mr. Moody liked to tell about had the right idea. Some one asked him how he got converted. He built a fire in a circle around a worm, and then, after the worm had crawled every way and had lain down to die, he took it out. Salvation is as simple and unmistakable as that.

Only, we are more than saved *from* something; we are saved *to* some one. The main reason why salvation so often lacks confidence and exhilaration is because it lacks communion. A negation is not vivid and convincing evidence. Just to be rid of sin is a matter soon forgotten. To be sure of our salvation we need, not the absence of anything, but the presence of Christ. To know that Christ is with us, to be quietly conscious of His loving sympathy and His powerful aid—that is to be conscious that we are saved.

There is, however, one more test of salvation: our care for the salvation of others. If you long for the salvation of others, you need not doubt your own salvation. If you are eager to join others to Christ, you may be sure that you are very close to Him. On the other hand, those that live selfish lives, careless whether those around them reach heaven or not—whatever fine show of religion they may present—will some day hear those most terrible of all words, "Depart from me; I never knew you."

The Secret of Endurance

THERE is more than one secret of endurance, and the brave man is not always brave for the same reason. Sometimes his patience and courage spring simply from the dogged confidence that things are going to grow better. He has the feeling expressed by Harriet Beecher Stowe : "When you get in a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as if you could not hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that's just the place and time that the tide'll turn." The hopeful man has a double strength—that of to-day and that of to-morrow. Hear James Whitcomb Riley sing :

"Who bides his time—he tastes the sweet
Of honey in the saltiest tear ;
And though he fares with slowest feet,
Joy runs to meet him, drawing near ;
The birds are heralds of his cause,
And like a never-ending rhyme
The roadsides bloom in his applause
Who bides his time."

No fortune is so bad that an imperial spirit cannot transform it to victory. I have read of a man, blind from childhood, who trained himself to become a skilled athlete, flying from trapeze to trapeze like a bird. He taught many scholars, carried on a school of health, and made valuable contributions to the science of his specialty. We all know the wonderful story of Mr. Fawcett, blind also from his youth, who made himself one of England's leading economists and most expert and valued members of Parliament.

The Secret of Endurance

Not only does the brave man rise superior to his disadvantages by patient endurance—often he even causes them to disappear. I remember the story of Lieutenant Henderson captured by the natives of the Gold Coast Hinterland. While they were discussing how they should kill him, he yawned, bade them wake him when they had made up their minds, and went to sleep! His captors concluded that he must be a personage of immense importance, and preserved him unharmed. In like manner many dangers of our lives will disappear if we will only—go to sleep!

Still another motive for endurance is the knowledge that Christ, the omnipotent Christ, is always with us if we are doing our duty. We may be like the preaching cobbler, who, when warned that a mob had gathered to prevent his speaking, replied, "God has given me a sign in my heart that I am to preach for Him to-night, and after that I take no account of the number of my enemies." In all dangers we may bravely repeat Susan Coolidge's verse:

"Then is the time of test, when Faith
Cries to the heart which inly faints:
'Courage! nor let thy forces dim.
Although He slay thee, trust in Him
Who giveth good and tempereth ill,
And never fails, and never will,
To be the refuge of His saints.'"

Yes, Christ is with us. We can endure, as seeing Him who is invisible. "Courage!" cried Samuel Rutherford of old. "Up your heart! When yé do tire, He will bear both you and your burden."

The Little End of Things

I ONCE heard a most instructive discourse on "The Small End of Great Problems." The speaker, an eminent Englishman, likened all our human interests to the radii of a circle. They grow out to the stars. But they also converge upon a point. Only a short distance from the centre they span a space our arms cannot grasp ; out among the stars they include vast spaces our thought itself cannot grasp ; but at the centre, where they start, a child's hand can cover them all.

His illustrations, I am sorry to say, I do not remember, but we might take the infinitely complicated problem of the relations between labor and capital, involving nearly every man, woman, and child on earth, connected with every work of man, influencing his happiness and welfare at almost every point, and presenting difficulties that seem to defy a consistent, harmonious solution. For many years theorists and practical men have reached after a comprehension of these problems, and have fallen back, thwarted. Has the difficulty a small end ? Do its radii converge ? Yes, upon your kitchen, for instance. Is the girl there treated like a fellow being or a machine ? Is she given fair wages, a comfortable, pleasant room, a due amount of leisure ? And in return for this is she industrious, obedient, considerate and cheerful ? These are simple matters, easily comprehended and adjusted ; but they involve the entire problem of the relation between labor and capital.

There is no truth more necessary for the Chris-

The Little End of Things

tian to learn, that he may wisely conduct his life, than this, that eternal issues are always fought out on small arenas.

Is he to be pure? It is not a question of a knightly combat with some superb temptation, in a clanging tournament, with banners waving and spectators gazing enthralled. This infinite question is decided for him by the refusal to look at that indecent picture, the tossing aside of this sensuous novel, the avoidance, to-day, to-morrow, the next day, of some little temptation to impurity.

Is he to be a leader? Not if he waits for some momentous crisis, when the throngs will turn pale faces toward him, and cry with one voice, "Step to the head, take control, or we are lost!" Throngs are not so silly. Leadership is won as Gladstone won it, on the day when he planned to take a long walk, and took it, though a driving rain had come up, because he would not break through his habit of carrying out his plans. It is won by just such trivial exercises of the will.

And so one might easily continue, but it is not necessary. The essential thing is for the Christian to remember constantly that life is decided, eternal life, as he decides upon its trifling details. If any great matter perplexes him, its solution lies close at hand, and not far off. If he does not "get on in the world," the barrier is made up of some little bad habit, multiplied into a mountain by constant repetition. And if he wins entrance to heaven, the abode where he is to dwell in happiness forever will be made up of small kindnesses and little self-denials.

The Needy at Our Door

WHAT is the easiest thing a man can do? Shut his eyes.

No one has the least difficulty in persuading himself, and usually in persuading others, that the house, the church, the town he lives in are all right. That things are going on about as well as might be expected. That really there is no need of taking trouble. Yet sin is all around us, and want and woe are everywhere, and if the world were sure to end to-morrow, what a cry of terror would ascend to heaven!

Or, if we do recognize the needs of the world, it is so easy to stop with the satisfaction of having recognized them. The world is full of men pointing proudly to some lack they have discovered. "I have discovered it," they say, "got up meetings about it, made speeches on it, discussed it in newspapers and books. I have done my duty. Now let the world do the rest."

One man lifting a corner of a load is worth a hundred men guessing at its weight and describing the muscles used in lifting it.

I would not have one prayer meeting less, one sermon less; but prayer meeting and sermon must be carried on into actual stagnant pool. At the end of every prayer meeting should be written, "To be continued in our next"—on Monday, or Thursday, or Friday.

For instance, Lazarus at the gate. You must

The Needy at Our Door

know some one family, at least, that is in physical need. Feed them, clothe them, help them to feed and clothe themselves. You must know one person, at least, that is in spiritual need, not even the dogs licking the sores of the soul. You may not be wise, but you know more of Christ than he knows, and you can tell him. Open your eyes. Be honest with yourself and others. Look to your gate. Lazarus is there.

You are needy yourself. Dives never discovers how poor he is until he tries to help Lazarus. He finds that he is poor in tact, poor in sympathy, poor in practical wisdom ; and these are serious kinds of poverty. Nothing will make you so clearly conscious of your weakness as the attempt to aid the weak.

But no one ever even tried to help without being helped. Burden-bearing is the best gymnasium. The foolish man speedily becomes wise when he sets himself with all his heart at helping the unfortunate. The feeble find a strange power coming into their arms as soon as they place them under a fallen brother or sister. There is nothing in the world that most men need so much as to help those in need.

The Joy of Service

WHAT kind of service is joyous? All kinds to which God calls us. Some think of prayer, Bible-reading, and sermon-hearing as service—an idea so masterful that we have come to call our meetings for those purposes *the services* of the church.

Others, perhaps neglecting these services, think they serve God acceptably only when they are busy on some errand of charity, giving money or comforting the sorrowful. And neither party is right, because both are right. Richard Thomas has drawn the true lesson from that Bethany incident :

“She who has chosen Martha’s part,
The planning head, the steady heart,
So full of household work and care,
Intent on serving everywhere,
May also Mary’s secret know,
Nor yet her household cares forego ;
May sit and learn at Jesus’ feet,
Nor leave her service incomplete.”

And Mary must also assume Martha. One day, in the capital city of Ohio, a wretched drunken woman was sitting, maudlin, on the curbstone, surrounded by a crowd of teasing boys. A carriage, passing in the street, suddenly stopped, and a lady got out. She talked with the miserable creature a while, then put her in her carriage, and drove off. That lady was the wife of Governor Hayes, who afterward became President of the United States. Her character became a blessed incentive to thousands of others because it made itself manifest in Christ-like deeds.

All loving service is service of Christ. A beau-

The Joy of Service

tiful fable is told of that kindly saint, Elizabeth of Hungary. One day she found a leprous child, and because there seemed no other place to put it, she laid it in her own bed in the palace. Hearing of what had happened, her husband, filled with disgust, went to look at the loathsome object; and lo! when he turned down the coverlet he saw the Christ-child, glowing with light and radiant with beauty. Such a transformation awaits even the most disagreeable duty, if done in the spirit of love.

When we come really to believe this great truth, we shall seek for no other reward for our service than just Christ's glad presence at the goal. And we shall go to every task with eager joy, because Christ will await us in it. We shall grow to be like that English soldier in India. The doctor was inspecting the troops to see who were fit to join in the attack of Delhi, and passed by this youth, who looked sick. "For God's sake," exclaimed the young hero, "don't say I am unfit for duty. It's only a touch of fever, and the sound of the bugle will make me well."

Such is the ardor with which we Christians should leap forward at Christ's summons. And if the work is hard or the undertaking dangerous, still we should say with the poet:

"I may, like Brainerd, perish in my bloom,
A group of Indians weeping round my tomb;
I may, like Martyn, lay my burning head
In some lone Persian hut or Turkish shed;
I may—but never let my soul repine;
'Lo, I am with you'—heaven is in that line;
Tropic or pole, or mild or burning zone
Is but a step from my celestial throne."

Seek Souls

THE parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin are favorites of Christendom. It is beautiful to think of the Good Shepherd leaving the ninety and nine and faring forth through darkness and storm to find the one sheep that is lost. The picture is a moving one; but does it *move* us? Is not the greater part of our church activities merely a fattening of the ninety and nine? Is not our church "work" largely a getting ready for Christ's real work? Are not our so-called "services" only a preparation for service? And then, when we are prepared, nay, when we are surfeited with gospel truth and when sermons and prayer meetings have ceased to inspire us because of our very familiarity with the principles of the Christ-like life, do we go out into the darkness with our light, into the waste places with our surplus food? Or do we not, rather, approve ourselves because we have approved the plan of salvation, and so rest satisfied without saving a single soul?

These words are not for you if you are honestly, earnestly, trying in Christ's strength to save some sinner out of the fold; but if you are not, they are for you.

All men would be soul-seekers if they could be self-seekers at the same time. If we could be missionaries without taking trouble, Paul's mantle would be on all our shoulders. But you can't stay in the warm fold and at the same time hunt lost sheep.

Seek Souls

Love of the world and love of souls cannot dwell together in any heart. Soul-saving will swallow up your money, it will eat into your time, it will devour your strength. You cannot serve God and mammon. There is room on your head for only one crown. Shall it be of pewter or of diamonds?

Lost sheep stray into hard places. You cannot go after them and keep in the pleasant meadows.

If you have a pair of legs, you *can* go after them, though. You can ask, "Do you love Christ?" You can write a letter: "I wish you would follow my Christ." It is not easy, but it is entirely feasible for any one.

Personal, definite work is the only kind that counts. Standing at the door of the sheepfold and making proclamation: "Come here, all you lost sheep, and let me save you," will do no good. You must go where the lost sheep are; you must follow the track of one of them.

How ashamed I am when I think of the Klondike, of those determined fellows climbing up into those rocky fastnesses over toils unimaginable and privations all but unendurable; and they do it merely for grains of yellow dust. Souls are the fine gold of the universe. Shall we sit in our easy chairs and expect them to fall into our laps? Nay, let us forth into the Klondikes! Undismayed by obstacles, unmoved by rebuffs, the splendid zeal men show in their pursuit of perishable wealth let us manifest in our supreme, our heavenly calling, the search for souls.

How to Get Rid of Sin

THERE was a stump in our yard. It was an ugly thing, and directly in the way of the lawn-mower, yet for various unreasonable reasons it was preserved year after year. Certain members of the family had become accustomed to it, as a man becomes accustomed to a decayed tooth and will not have it out. A box of plants was set upon the top. Vines were trained up from below. So it was expected that the stump would be hidden from view.

But the top began to cave in, so that the box had to come down. Slabs of bark began to fall off, bringing the vines with them. The ground was littered with chips of rotten wood, which clogged the lawn-mower. Still, for months, that ugly stump was preserved, an eyesore and a nuisance.

How to get rid of sin? Just as, finally, we got rid of the stump. Stop trying to hide it, to beautify it, to utilize it, and set yourself to exterminate it. Pull it up, roots and all. Plant grass seed over the place.

I remember a letter I received once from a young clergyman far away in South Africa. He was the victim of a secret sin that was undermining his life, and he asked me, a perfect stranger, what he should do. The letter itself, in its undertone of weakness, revealed the situation. He was in love with the sin. He did not really wish release from it. He wanted to grow vines over the stump.

There is much of such dishonest struggling

How to Get Rid of Sin

against sin, barring the front door, but leaving the back door invitingly open. There is very little of the earnestness of Martin Luther, who threw his inkstand at the devil, or of that young prince who, tempted by his base father to a fascinating sin, deliberately bit off his tongue that the pain might drive the evil thoughts from his mind. There is little "resisting unto death, striving against sin." As Matthew Arnold sung,

" We do not what we ought,
What we ought not, we do,
And lean upon the thought
That chance will bring us through."

Let us learn that there is no chance in all God's universe. What a man sows, he must reap. As certainly as a hand thrust into boiling steel will get burned to the bone, so surely does any sinful act inflict its own punishment. It may be delayed, but it will come. No eye may see it, but the sinner will be eaten at the heart.

If you would get rid of sin, therefore, you must both fear it and hate it, and I know of no better way to this fear and hatred than by a thorough study of the Bible. Its histories paint the results of sin more terribly than any other book. Its exhortations cry out most strenuously against it. Its arguments show the folly of sin most convincingly. And, best of all, at the heart of the Book is the Cross, which is the sinner's only hope and his sure salvation. If you would flee from your sin, flee to the Bible.

The Pathway to Peace

THERE are those who say "Peace, Peace, when there is no peace." To ignore one's sin, to refuse to think of duty, to withhold one's self from contact with the evil and sorrow of earth—this is the pathway to peace taken by many men; but they never reach their goal.

As Canon Kingsley says, "There is a discontent which is certain, sooner or later, to bring with it the peace of God. It is to be discontented with *ourselves*, as very few are." To be discontented with our *lot* is peace-destroying; but to "scorn content and live laborious days" is at least the fair beginning of peace.

No one knows what peace is, however unruffled his life and fortunate his circumstances, until his heart is at rest. "It is when there is calm at the centre," says Dr. Blair, "that there will be real quiet of the surface."

And now, after all the "Don't Worry Clubs" and the study of the will, there remains only one sure way of getting a peaceful heart, and that is to get Christ in it. Dr. Edward Judson thus translates the familiar verse of Isaiah: "The soul whom Thou dost sustain, Thou wilt mold into perfect peace; because he trusted in Thee." That is, "the believer is the formless lump of clay. Jehovah is the artist. The outcome is an exquisite vase, bearing the legend, Perfect peace."

The Pathway to Peace

Edward Everett Hale's shrewd advice is :
"Never bear more than one kind of trouble at a time. Some people bear three kinds—all they have had, all they have now, and all they expect to have." That is because they do not trust God. The vase of their lives is ugly and awry. "If God," said Bushnell, "is really preparing us all to become that which is the very highest and best thing possible, there ought never to be a discouraged or uncheerful being in the world."

A sailor in a shipwreck was once thrown upon a small rock, and clung to it, in great danger, until the tide went down. "Say, Jim," asked his friends after he was rescued, "didn't you shake with fear when you were hanging on that rock?" "Yes; *but the rock didn't,*" was the significant reply. Christ is the Rock of Ages. Cling to Him, and you will be at rest.

"They that find Christ, find peace.
A great rock's shadow in a weary land;
Fountains and palm-trees after desert sand;
After the prison pen and chains—release!
O glad the heart that enters into rest!
O sweet the song at even when Christ is guest!"

There is only one way to get into our lives Christ, the Peace-giver. That is, obey Him! Fénelon puts the truth in formal fashion when he says: "True peace consists only in the possession of God; and the possession of God here below is only to be found in submission to the faith and in obedience to the law."

Who would not have peace?

Who, then, would not have Christ?

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