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His Peace"



CLELAND BOYD McAFEE



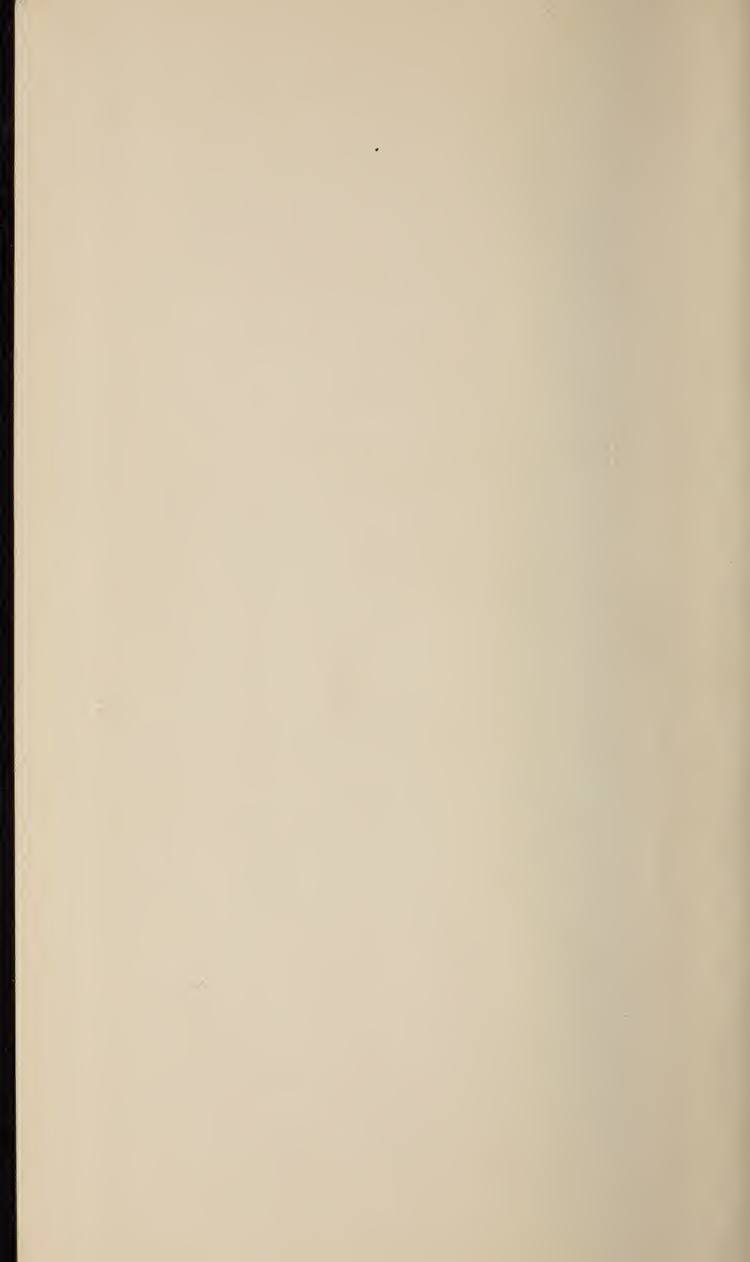
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“HIS PEACE”

By
CLELAND BOYD McAFEE
McCormick Theological Seminary



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13V 4832
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New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 125 North Wabash Ave.
Toronto: 25 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

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“My peace I leave with you : My peace I give unto you.”—*John xiv. 27.*

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee.”—*Isaiah xxvi. 3.*

“The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”—*Philippians iv. 7.*

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I

A WORD OF PURPOSE

His peace—the peace of Christ !
We know not all its secret yet,
But well we know the strain and fret
Of hours beleaguered and beset ;
And we would know the joyous rest
Of life that thrills with eager zest
In trusting Him as knowing best—
Herein is peace—the peace of Christ !

Is it an age of doubt or an age of faith ?
Ten years ago Dr. van Dyke called it one ;
Dr. Bradford called it the other. Readers
of their two books will see how both were
right. The situation has not greatly
changed. There was never more readi-
ness to believe what is not fully proved,
but what experience makes important—it
is an age of faith. Yet it is still painfully
common to leave God out of life. What-
ever faith men have, it has not robbed our
age of a deep unrest. There is little denial
of God. There is disregard of Him in-
stead. That in the wide-spread life of men.

Therein is the weakness of much Chris-
tian life as well. The habit of resting the

“His Peace”

soul on God is left to mystics and the weak. The rest of us must make our sturdy fight and get out of it what we can. We are afraid of anything that smacks of sweetness in spiritual word or habit. We soon get too much of it. There is not the quality which we call manliness in it. And yet, there is something that our lives lack, something which leaves us able to fret and worry and be anxious. That something, surely, is a clearer realization of the present power of Jesus Christ. He has become a great, luminous, past-tense fact for us. He would become a great, illuminating, present-tense power in us. The old version made St. John say in the first chapter of his epistle, “who loved us and gave Himself for us.” The revision makes him say, “who loveth us and gave Himself for us.” We have lived under the old version, letting His love be a completed past-tense fact. We need to live under the revised version, and know His present love.

If this little message shall point the way for any soul out of worry and annoyance to His peace, it will serve its purpose.

II

THE UNTRoubLED HEART

His peace—the peace of Christ !
The thorn is sharp and pierces sore,
But grace abounds for thee the more—
And this is peace—the peace of Christ !

“LET not your heart be troubled.” You remember what the early Christian replied when the persecutor said, “We will destroy your religion, we will tear down your churches and burn your books ; you shall have no way of worship.” “You can do all that,” was the reply, “but you must leave us the stars.” While there are stars towards which one may look and which will send back God’s love in their twinkling and shining, there can be worship. And even when the clouds cover the stars and the darkness can almost be felt, the heart can know that no cloud blots out the stars. Above the shadows they are glittering as clear as ever.

"His Peace"

"Looking up to that light which is common to all,
And round to these shadows on each side which
fall

In time's silent circle so varied for each,
Is it nothing to know that they never can reach
So far, but that light lies beyond them forever?"

Clouds pass; stars remain.

Is it not such a truth Jesus teaches when He says, "Let not your heart be troubled"? There are upheavals in our surroundings. Our circumstances fall into chaos. Yet our hearts can remain true and strong. All human plans for social renovation begin with the wish to change man's condition. We want to destroy poverty. We must have better homes, better ventilation, better streets—and so we must. But that will give a peace that will last just as long as the condition lasts. That is "as the world giveth." He gives "not as the world giveth," and adds at once, "Let not your heart be troubled." He does not promise us surroundings just to our taste. Rather, He would make us quiet in any surroundings. He does not give His servants palaces to live in, but makes them live royally in quiet homes.

The Untroubled Heart

He does not keep them from passing through the waters, but promises to be with them. He does not take them out of the world, but keeps them from the evil.

That is the difference between His peace and the world's peace. The world makes peace depend on things or possessions or surroundings. He makes it depend on the heart and its relation to Himself. Things and possessions and surroundings may then be what they will; the heart has peace.

Two illustrations come to mind. First, there was the old prophet sent to Nineveh. He was never a happy man in anything we are told of him, save one. After he had felt the burning heat of the sun until he was faint, God made a vine grow over him, shading and cooling him. The account says, "Then was Jonah exceeding glad." Why? Because God is so good, and had cared for him so tenderly? Because His love is unfailing, remembers a whole city and spares it, but does not forget one lone man? No; the verse says, "Then was Jonah exceeding glad—*of the*

“*His Peace*”

gourd.” Ah, then if Jonah loses the gourd, he will lose his peace and joy. Sure enough, when the gourd withered and dried away, Jonah’s gladness dried up also, and he was the same troubled, unhappy man he had been. If his heart had gone back of the gourd to its Sender, and had learned from it the goodness of a loving Father, he would not have lost his joy with the fading of this one illustration of infinite love. But are there not many hearts whose peace depends, not on God’s presence which never fails, but on the presence of things which may fail? Dr. Parkhurst suggests that Adam and Eve hid from God behind the very trees which He had given them as blessings. It has happened many times since. We rejoice so much in the gift that we lose sense of the Giver, and when the temporal gift ceases, our hearts are forlorn, though the eternal Giver remains.

Secondly, there was the Gentile apostle. He had a “thorn in the flesh,” no matter what. He was mighty in prayer and he pleaded for its removal, but was denied.

The Untroubled Heart

He was told that he must be all that he ought to be in spite of it. Enough grace was promised to sustain him in his work in spite of the thorn which harassed him so. Divine strength is perfected in weakness. An old instructor called my attention once to a saying which promises this. It is a familiar verse and must have accent on the last word: "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee"—sustain *thee*, but leave thee under the burden sometimes. Not always, to be sure. Sometimes the "burden of our heart rolls away." But sometimes He gives us grace to bear the burden and leaves it upon us, not as our own any longer, but as one borne for Him.

Here is my friend with failing sight—could there be a heavier burden? He rolls his burden upon the Lord. Then what? He continues to grow blind. But now it is no longer his own burden, which he must bear grittily and bravely. It is a burden of God laid upon him to be borne for the sake of the God to whom a while ago he gave it. Grace comes to him to

“*His Peace*”

sustain *him*, according to the promise. Unto him “it is given in behalf of Christ not only to believe on His name, but also to suffer for His sake.”

Or here is a mother whose little one is failing day by day. With breaking heart she takes the burden to God, placing it all at His feet. Then the little one goes steadily on to the gates of death, through them, and on into the glory that awaits. Meanwhile, what of the mother? His grace sustains *her* under the burden which is no longer her burden, but one she bears for Him. Let her not think she did not roll her burden on Him; let her not fear she did not pray as she ought; let her not doubt Him nor reproach herself. Let her go her way steadily and firmly, sure of His sustaining grace for her life.

No hand takes the thorn out of the flesh, but His grace is sufficient for the man who must endure it.

III

THE DAILY FRICTION

His peace—the peace of Christ !

To see Him through the dust and grime of life,
To hear Him through the din and roar of strife,
To feel His hand, whoever holds the knife—

Oh, this is peace—the peace of Christ !

I RAN across an expression a while ago that has stuck in my memory very tenaciously : “ The fretting friction of our daily lives.” That puts in seven words the ground of most unsettlement. Not many of us are “ done to death by an enterprise of the first order,” as Dr. Watson insists. Most of us can keep our patience and cheeriness well in the large things of life. It is the nagging annoyances and chafing littleness of every day that fret us and wear us out. Some of our unhappiest days are made unhappy by events that are so petty we can hardly catalogue them. It is not alone the loss of a large amount of money that can unsettle us. It is also the slam-

“His Peace”

ming of the office door and the carelessness of the serving maid and the blotting of the manuscript and the miscarriage of a letter—not one of them important in itself, but all finding us nervous and irritable and ready for wreck.

Dumas tells of the interview between Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, when the queen learns of the evil things that are charged to her and reproaches the king for withholding punishment from the offenders. His reply is a chronicle of many an annoyed life: “We are bitten, stung, irritated, by we know not what enemies. We ferret them out expecting to find a serpent, a crocodile, to kill or to crush; and we find instead an insect so mean, so base, so despicable, that we dare not soil our hands by touching it, even to punish it.” And much of our unsettlement in heart comes from conditions which are so petty, we would not alter them if we could. We are ashamed and abashed as we think what we have done in losing our poise and balance over such a thing.

A few years ago in one of our magazines

The Daily Friction

there ran a story which showed a man strong and self-contained for the most part, who one night cast himself down under the trees of the orchard, digging his fingers into the soil and pressing his face painfully against the ground, hating and despising himself the while for his weakness and unmanliness. The worst of his sorrow was the evident weakening of his own heart and will in the presence of trouble which he should have commanded.

“The fretting friction of our daily lives”—how shall we overcome it? Can we not do it by mere strength of will, by steady self-control? Yes, sometimes. We yield much too quickly to our moods. The time comes when we almost defend our wrong deeds by saying that we were in this mood or that. Yes, but the mood needs defense. We waked in the morning unsettled and irritable, and we knew it. Why then did we not keep close rein over ourselves? Why did we let ourselves go when the danger appeared? The old law contained a quaint expression of this very duty in its statute which held an owner

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responsible if he knew that his ox would gore men, and yet did not restrain him. The day when our tempers are ugly and dangerous is the day when we may not yield without greater condemnation.

But we cannot always get that self-control by mere force of will. There need to enter into our lives some larger things. We need to feel ourselves in the presence of some great steady power.

Have you not always had a little touch of sympathy with Martha in that colloquy with Jesus about Mary? Suppose Martha had done what Mary was doing, suppose she had allowed her ministry of preparation to go undone, and had settled down at Jesus' feet that day—would not many have suffered? And ought she to have been rebuked for her busy life, crowded and pressed with duties? Ah, but that is not the point at all. Martha is not rebuked for that. The account says that Martha was “cumbered,” annoyed, worried, nervous, with much serving. Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet. But Jesus was there for Martha as well as for Mary. She had a

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right to the inspiration of His Presence just as truly as had Mary. And she was leaving out the element of rest and peace which was most needed. "That good part"—what was it but the joy of the presence of Christ? Martha was none too busy, nobody ever is. But she was too much burdened, too anxious, too worried. It did not quiet her to have Jesus there. He was actually just so much more burden in her busy life. Paraphrase the reply of our Lord: "Martha, Martha, you are busy and anxious about a great many things. You have many duties to your household and your guests, but you lack one thing, a better thing than you have, more needed than all the rest. It worries you to see Mary sitting here at My feet. But what you need is to put just that element into your own busy life. You cannot sit here, for your tasks are other, but you must often pass and repass this place. I am here for you as truly as for Mary, and you may have the steadying influence of My presence as you hurry about, saving you annoyance, sparing you anxiety, releasing

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your nervous tension.” That is the large meaning of the few words of Jesus. No one who has been a guest in a home where he felt his presence added more of burden than it brought of joy can fail to understand His feeling.

Is there any need of our lives greater than the realization of that quieting, steady-ing Presence? We have not too much to do. If we feel that we have, let us take a fair survey of our lives and ask if there is anything we can give up. Are not all our labours only opportunities spelled in shorter word? But the harassed life is the hampered life. We cannot stop and sit at Jesus’ feet. (I have always hoped that Mary got up at once and took her part in the serving.) But as we go about, busy and eager, we can catch the inspiration and peace of His Presence, even though we cannot stop to sit down before Him.

One evening when I was urging something of this sort at our prayer-meeting, my friend, President George B. Stewart, was present and added the beautiful word

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that the mission of the Church is to keep in mind, in this burdened, struggling, suffering old world, that Jesus is sitting in the midst with His quietness and calmness and peace. Certainly it is the service of the quiet life that quiets others, and the presence of Christ is the assurance of peace when we realize it.

This is the mood in which Tennyson was that day when he looked through Lockyer's telescope at the star-cluster in Perseus. As he turned away from a long look through the tube, he said, "One doesn't think much of the county families after that!" No, one does not. The county families seem to be less important than they were, at least less charged with unsettling and annoying power. The arching heavens are overhead, the great ongoing forces are all about, Christ is in the midst and there is reason for a great peace.

Herein lies the cure of our fretting over petty annoyances. A larger presence is here to overshadow them. As when a dear friend comes into the home and we

“His Peace”

so rejoice in his presence that we feel it unworthy and impossible to chafe over little things made the smaller by his inspiration. And when we read our daily annoyances as elements in a service which we are rendering to Him whose presence dignifies life, they cease to be petty, they cease to be so annoying. We rise from the friction of daily life into its freshness and power.

IV

THE DOUBLE SECRET

His peace—the peace of Christ!
The work not done may not destroy
The work already laid aside.
His treasury well-bolted stands and barred,
And that is safe whate'er betide—
In this is peace—the peace of Christ!

I KNEW once with the intimacy of a son, a sturdy, tender man, whose life was spent in a college presidency. Sometimes I have thought him the sturdiest man I ever knew, so splendidly did he override every difficulty and face every dilemma. But sometimes he seemed to me all heart and feeling, so did evil hurt him and wrong sting him. At these times he seemed aquiver with exposed nerves. But I do not remember, in a long acquaintance, that I ever saw him unmanned or oppressed into unpeace. No doubt in his younger days he was so, but I knew him in his riper years, when he was climbing up the steeper heights where the

“His Peace”

sudden flash of glory enveloped him and left the hearts of his lovers aching.

I believe I know his secret—a double one. And this is it. One day the president deputed me to secure the facts of some especially disheartening failure, wherein a trusted student had sadly betrayed his trust. When I went to him and told him the tale, myself sick at heart and discouraged, I could see how it hurt him, and that he was suffering. But, presently, after a moment's silence, I heard him say, almost to himself, “After all, it pays!” and he had tears in his voice and eyes. I looked, and he held in his hands the alumni roll of the college. He had risen above that one failure and had rested in the joy of service already blessed. Many times I saw him claim the peace of service, and that is part of the secret of his peace.

And the other part? Well, he used to come in, tired of body and wearied of mind, go to his study with a step that was eager and yet jaded; there was a familiar click as the key turned in the lock, and I knew

The Double Secret

if I could look into the quiet room I should see that tall figure kneeling before the great chair, his face buried in his hands. And if I had had eyes to see, as he had heart to feel, I should have beheld the ministering spirits of God sent to quiet and soothe and rest the man who was casting his burdens where he was bidden—upon the Lord. He would come out from that room of prayer with a new light in his eye, and with a new spring in his step, a rested, refreshed man. —It was the peace of trust. Those concerns that were troubling him became God's concerns—how then could they burden him?

That is the double secret of many a life of calm peace—service and trust.

Yet that does not mean drowning sorrow and annoyance and anxiety in work, so that we shall forget them. That is a remedy for some ills, but it is not a lasting one, for the "old sorrow" will "wake and cry." The peace that comes from service grows out of the thought of all life as a time of labour—not for an end of our own choosing, but for ends of God's choosing.

“His Peace”

“Ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” Yes, in the Lord. That is the point to which Jesus would lead us. Our labour is often wretchedly in vain in itself, or for our own ends. Our unhappiness grows out of looking at labour from that side only. There were ends we wanted to gain, and we fail in them. Peace comes from looking at labour from God’s side, and seeing how His ends are never defeated. Failures in our plans are the incidents in God’s plans which are moving on to success.

You have no doubt seen Dr. Lyman Abbott’s word, that Jesus always treated death not as the end of life, but as an incident in life. It is a wise word, and it can be said about failures and defeats in the Lord’s service. They are never the end of the service; they are incidents in it. Our hopes may be dashed, our plans may miscarry, but the eternal hope and that infinite plan in which we all have part cannot fail of accomplishment.

We often miss the point of our lives, as the disciples missed the point of Jesus’ life.

The Double Secret

They thought the crucifixion meant wreck—and it did mean wreck for their plans and ideas. So they were dazed and sad. But when, later, they learned God's purpose for His life, they found the crucifixion an incident in the success of that purpose. Defeat, from their point of view, was success from God's point of view. And then peace returned to them when they came to God's point of view and saw that none of His plans meet final defeat.

Do you not see, then, where lies the peace of service? Here is vast work to be accomplished. Help is everywhere needed. Have my efforts in one place been unavailing? Do I seem to have accomplished nothing? Let me be sure that my labour is not in vain in the Lord, and that no amount of seeming so makes it so. Let me take up my further task and render my further service cheerily. Let me gain new joy from service that has been blessed. Shall I forget the alumni roll because a present student fails? No; "after all, it pays." Thus we may come into the peace of service.

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And this is the peace of trust as well. When we were children, we were allowed to hold the buckle end of the reins during the ride with parents, but there were father's hands over ours. There is a mighty hand nearer the bits than ours. The guidance of the world, the driving of its forces—that is not our task. Our part is much smaller than that. We learn to do our part and trust Him who holds the whole. Dr. Deems taught us to say :

“That man is blest
Who does his best
And leaves the rest.”

And that is true. What the man does, and what he leaves, belong to God. Thus we may come into the peace of trust.

V

COME YE ASIDE

His peace—the peace of Christ !
To go aside with Him,
And let the world run on,
As though we had not been—
To trust the Hand that covers ours
And feel that all is well ;
It brings His peace—the peace of Christ !

IT is no small blessing to a busy life to be laid aside from all work for a time, and to be compelled to look on the world's rush and hurry from one side. When we are part of the working force, we are in constant fever of eagerness to be doing. Then there comes a sickness that lays us aside, or a dear one is laid low with a contagious disease and we are shut in from the world for a while. It does not come to us and we cannot go to it. But we can see how it goes on, and can catch at least the echo of its running. The blessing of such seclusion is a double one. First, it shows us how much greater the work is than we supposed.

“His Peace”

We thought it could not get on without us. And it does get on. It is too large and great and important to depend on one man or one family. It finds others to take our places and goes on. The church services are held, and the school is open, and the store does business, and the community misses us and—goes on with its life. Some say, That is discouraging and not cheering. Only from a wrong point of view can it look so. Let us word it to ourselves this way instead: “The work which I have been engaged in is part of a great purpose which is larger than my work, and greater than I. That purpose does not depend on me, but it can use me. While I am part of it, I am important; but I am not so essential to it that it rests on me. It can be accomplished without me.” The manager of a great business said once that he always kept two men in line for every important place, so that if one dropped out another could be put in. That is because the great business is too large to hinge on one man who cannot be fully counted on. So are the great purposes of God much too

Come Ye Aside

large for us. And yet most of our unhappiness in life comes from fearing that failure may follow our lives. We cannot spare a moment from business or our position. We feel that if we do some great damage may come. Our lives gradually pass under a burden of concern for our tasks. But failure cannot follow our lives if we are part of the great purpose of God. Our worry and lack of peace come rather from magnifying ourselves than from magnifying our service.

The second blessing of seclusion is that from it we can go back to our work more eager to do it well. If it is so large it will be worth while to do the largest possible share of it. We may not work nervously or anxiously, as though it depended on us. Its moving on without us forbids that. And therefore we may work eagerly and hopefully,—eager to put our largest labour into it, hopeful of largest results from our labour. To a petty task, we might return with a sense of despair; to a great task, we return with a sense of victory.

“*His Peace*”

Out of such seclusion ought to come deep peace for us. Of course, there may be lesser odds and ends which are not so well done by others as by ourselves. The house is not kept so clean. The store is not so attractive. The service is not quite so exact. But the great, important work does not falter ; it goes on ; and we learn from it that humility which is the beginning of peace, God's peace.

But what if we do not return ? What if the voice of our Lord calls us to come aside from the busy rush of life, not to return to it ? Why, then, we hear Him speak to us as He spoke to Moses, His servant whom He loved, who had not yet finished what he felt to be his work, but who was called to leave his people and go aside from them up into the mountain, to be alone with God. Before he had left the earth he waited a space there in the seclusion and saw all the great future to which his work was leading. It was something to have done what he had done. The work accomplished was ground for joy. But the work accomplished was as nothing

Come Ye Aside

to the work which had just begun and was still going on. Our final seclusion, when we are shut out from the world's tasks, may be made our time of mountain vision, when we look not simply back upon what we have done, but out upon what the world is now doing, and on to what shall yet be done in the power which has helped our own lives. There on the mountain top, which men call a bed of final sickness, or a room of seclusion, or the encroachment of old age, we pause for a while before we pass on into the glory that awaits. It is as though our boat had sailed in out of the storm, under the lee of a sheltering cliff, and had a bit of sea yet to pass before it came to the final harbour. On that mountain top let there be no fretting nor worry, but the quietness of a peaceful heart.

VI

THE DEEPEST UNREST

His peace—the peace of Christ !
To take our sin and all our shame,
Our weaknesses, our faults, our blame,
And set against them all His Name—
Oh, this is peace—the peace of Christ !

DEEPER than all else lies the unrest of sin. How can men say it is not real ! As for us, our hearts refuse to rest in the soft denials of that which upheaves us so. There are times when we are out of harmony with law and with love. There are times when there is such jangling as grates on our ears. We were feeling so secure in the mastery of our evil habit ; we restrained the hasty word ; we checked the unworthy thought. And then one black day it came again and we seemed to have made no advance after all. Our tongues could be as venomous as ever ; our minds could be as fertile of evil thoughts as ever ; the old, bitter quarrel awoke and was as

The Deepest Unrest

wide-eyed as ever. Is there outlook for anything different? Or back yonder is a sin, repented, confessed to God, made right so far as we could; but still there. We cannot look back without seeing it. It burdens and clouds the present hour. Shall we never be rid of it? Or that failing, falling one so near to us; he sins so willfully, so persistently. We do not trust even his spasms of grief now. We have lost all hope for him. We have struggled with him, we have prayed for him, we have helped him over and over. It has come to nothing. Will he ever be stopped and saved from his sin?

Such experiences are the whirlwind of the soul. No human word brings peace. The tried soul scorns the pleasant word that sin is nothing at all. It wants relief, not subterfuge.

Well, there is a peace of God for that storm also. If sin is terribly real, salvation is blessedly real. Over against the horror of evil stands the hope of the atoning Christ. There is more than figure of speech in the Greek story of the waters of

“His Peace”

Lethe. It has been caught up in the Christian hymn of the fountain filled with blood, in which a man may plunge and lose his guilty stains. No man is profound enough to explain how it is done. We catch faint glimpses of its method, but as we go on we learn more fully its meaning. And its meaning is that Christ comes to us in our sin and makes it first loathsome to us, and then impossible. Our hearts revolt against it, and if we fall into it we do not know the old love for the sin. The first effect of the coming of Christ into a sinful life is to make it the more wretched. The low life never looks so low as in sight of the highest ideal. But after that wretchedness, and in the midst of it, comes the peace of the struggle towards the higher ideal. The dead past is left to bury its past sins. We who have been dead in sin have become dead unto sin.

It is this that the Apostle means when he exclaims, “Therefore, being justified by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We have always read that in our familiar version, “We

The Deepest Unrest

have peace with God." But after all no one, not even our Lord Himself, can give us peace until we are ready to have it. In the gift of peace there are always two parties, the one who gives and the one who receives. And he who will not receive blocks the way of him who would give. So the Apostle speaks a sound truth when he says, not that we have peace, but let us have peace. Let us front our sin with the assurance of our Saviour. Let us front the failure of ourselves, or our loved ones, with the final overcoming power of Christ.

Three verses come to our help here in declaring the ability of Christ at our point of need. First, the great verse from the Hebrews, "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him,"—His ability meeting us at the entrance of the Christian life. Secondly, another verse from the Hebrews, "In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted,"—His ability following along the path with us. Then the greatest verse of all, with which

“His Peace”

Jude closes his letter, “Unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling and to set you before the presence of His glory, without blemish, in exceeding joy”—His ability pledged to the consummation of His work in us, until we, even we who have such stain of sin, such marks of falling, shall yet be presented faultless in His presence! This is the path to peace in the midst of the deepest unrest, the unrest of sin.

VII

THE ETERNAL PEACE

His peace—the peace of Christ !
To hear His voice at last say, Come !
To see His face and quick to be at home—
To cast our crown before His feet,
To know ourselves in Him complete—
And then to serve with no disquiet pressed,
To do His will and find in it our rest,
This must be peace—the peace of Christ !

WE are often reminded of the “present tenses of the blessed life.” “He that believeth hath eternal life”—not, shall one day reach it. “Now are we the children of God”—not, we may after a while attain to it. And more and more, we are finding our joy in the assurance that God’s plan for eternity is already begun in us. At the last, we are to be like Christ, and while it seems absurd as we know ourselves that it shall ever become fully true, yet even now we can rejoice in the faint beginning of that likeness. There are some things which He hates which we also hate, some

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things which He loves which we are coming to love. Dimly and feebly, His light begins to shine in us. In those faint outlines is the promise of the full likeness.

So it is with the eternal peace. We have the beginning of it now. Its future fullness will be the growth of what we now have, its hindrances all removed, its spirit never broken. We know nothing about the future which is not first worded to us in terms of the present, save that it is hinted that the reality is beyond our human speech. Yet whatever that eternal peace may be, its hither end is here in our hearts.

Think what it will mean to have a sense of perfect safety, together with perfect freedom. Do you not see it in the familiar word about the New Jerusalem, with its walls and open gates? In Dr. van Dyke's beautiful and suggestive story called "The Mansion," which is only the telling of a real dream whose dreamer has always counted it a vision, there is one mistaken note. When John Weightman came near the city, "the wall of the city was very low,

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a child could see over it, for it was made only of precious stones, which are never large." But when John the Beloved saw it the city had "a wall great and high," not made of precious stones, though its foundations were adorned with them. The Apostle's vision meets better the need of our hearts. The city has its massive walls. And that means safety. There was no city of the day of the Revelation which knew any other secret of safety. Let the wall be heavy enough and high enough and the people settled securely within. Then the figure swiftly changes. The walls are not prison walls; they shut no one in from freedom. There are gates, gates of pearl, but they are never shut at all by day, and there is no night there. Perfect safety with perfect freedom! How little we know of that here! How rich a freightage of peace it bears us so far as we know it!

For we know the beginning of it here. Any man knows something of it when he passes from the struggle for salvation into quiet trust for salvation. While we seek

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to save our lives there is strain, sometimes there is despair; but when we learn that our life is hid with Christ in God, we come into peace and into a great, new liberty. We walk no more in fear, but in love and confidence. Thus we learn the first lesson of the eternal peace. We are safe, and we are free.

Think what it will mean to end the fight with sin, and to end it not by fleeing, but by victory over it. I have a friend who is in the thick of the world's fight to-day, and has a keen zest for it, revelling in his chances to strike hard blows for God. The other day he came to mind when I read the story of a young Puritan dying on the field of Marston Moor, over whom Cromwell bent, saying: “My lad, I see there is something on thy spirit; what is it?” The lad replied, “That I have not been able to do more for God in this fight!” That is the spirit of my friend. He looks with no joy to ending the fight. No, but what fight? Is there no joy in feeling that the fight will be no more with those passions and desires and motives and dis-

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trusts which have made us so far unfit for the true service of our Lord? What other warfare we may be privileged to wage, we know not. We read with joy that "His servants shall serve Him." We have not really done that here, because so much time and strength have gone into the inner fight. End that, conquer sin at last, leave it outside those open gates, open to us and barred to it—and then we can serve Him, then we can run the errands of His universe if He commissions us. It is not death that works this change, and gives us this victory. Death has no magic power. It is what comes with death, the setting of our spirits free for the vision of His face with its transforming work, making us like Him. In that vision we win the victory over sin and are ready as conquerors to join His hosts for eternal service. But we serve then with eternal peace in our hearts.

Think of the peace which comes from leaving behind all sorrow and pain and tears and death. We dread them all; we shun them all. Yet all have met us, or await us still. And all have wrought their

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helpful work in us and for us. They asked an old saint what he would give up last in his memory of life, as he measured it by reasons of gratitude. He answered, “My sorrows!” Then he added that they had brought him his greatest comfort. Well, when the sorrow is over and the comfort remains, when the pain is ended and relief remains, when tears are over and the smile remains, when death is past and life is found—how shall one say what that will mean? Most of us have far more distress in what we dread than in what we undergo. What comes is not so bad as what may come. We hold all by so slender a thread,—who knows when it may break! Our path lies over ice so thin,—who knows if it will bear our weight! And even when we can see no cause for fear when we look about, there comes into our very happiest hours sometimes a sickening feeling that this cannot last; it is too ideal, too perfect, too beautiful! So often that fear is realized. But now, think of all that as past, think of looking forward not to some dead level of existence,

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but to a future full of surprises, of unexpected experiences, of new revelations and new services—but with no pain, nor sorrow, nor tears, nor death! Will there not be peace in an eternity like this?

But it all comes to its climax in the fact that we are to be with Him! We do not know what that means, when we try to word it. Our minds do not understand it; trust our hearts for that. We are like country children whose father is in the city and has there made for them a home which only awaits their coming. They do not know what is there; the experience they have had has only left them dimly aware of the meaning of the word he sends. But central in all their thought, underrunning all they expect, reassuring all their questioning, is the fact that their father is there, and they are to be with him. We are like them, but we are unlike them, for there await us no disappointments, no disillusionments. They may stretch their imagination beyond the reality; the half has not been told us. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the

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heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. The central fact for us also, underrunning all we expect, reassuring our questioning, is the fact that our Father is there, and we are to be with Him. We are to see the face of Him of whom we have thought, for whom we have sought to live. Seeing His face, and made like Him, we shall know the peace of God that passes all understanding, which shall keep our hearts through all eternity in Christ Jesus. And so, we shall enter fully into His peace.

Printed in the United States of America

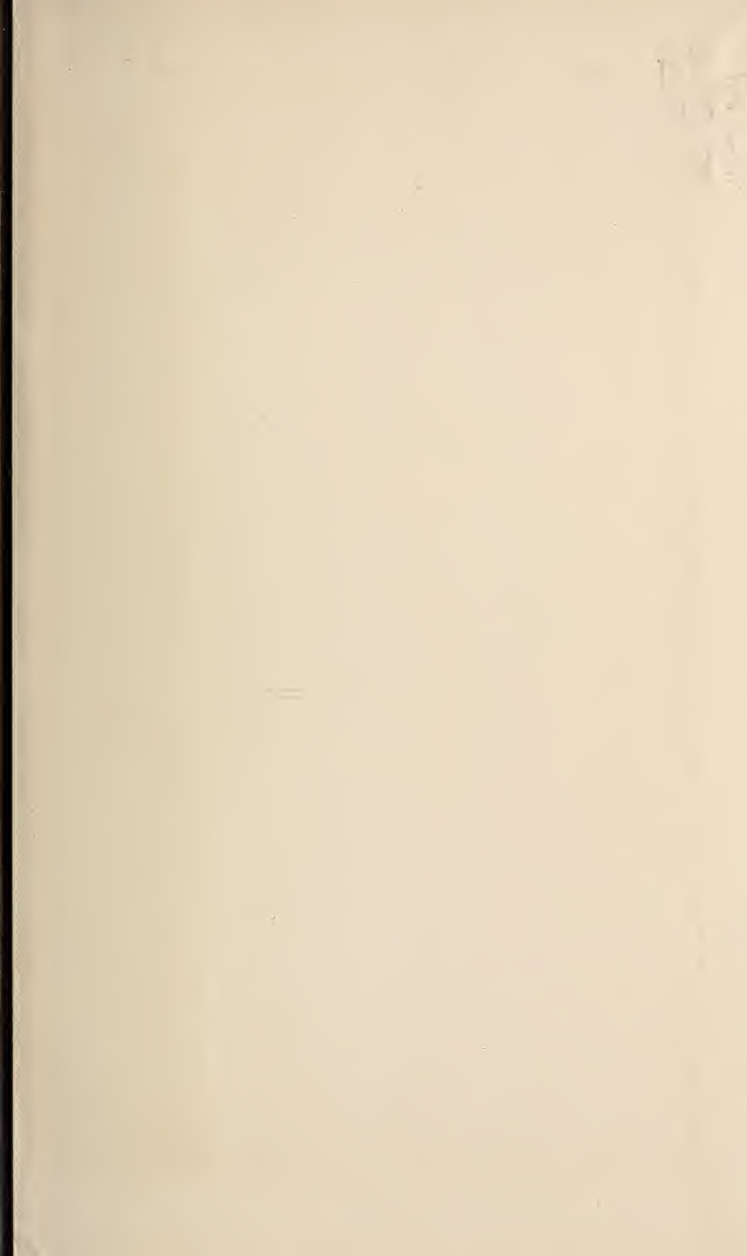
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