

tion be of greater importance? Could four words contain more meaning for youth, meaning for years, aye, and meaning for all eternity!

So comprehensive is this question that a whole lifetime might be spent in answering it, and then there would be more to answer still. But give me leave to point out one or two important points concerning the general question, and then to press home the personal question—"What is your life?"

I. Life is a Solemn Problem.

Who will tell us what life is? Where is the wise, where the scribe, where the philosopher who will undertake to define this strange but simple, this plain but inexplicable thing we call life? Of all mysteries, there are none greater than the mystery of life? It defies all the cunning of language; it resists the magic of the poet; it yields to the rod of no enchanter; it will not be expounded; it will not be explained, every man is a mystery. Every man is a wonder, every life a problem, which I for one believe God alone can solve.

If you doubt this, all you have to do is to shut yourself up alone for an hour and talk to your own soul, and you will soon say as the Psalmist did—"I am fearful and wonderfully made"; and surely he could not be speaking of his body then. There is as much difference between you and your body as between you and the house in which you live. Talk with yourself, that inner, secret self, and ask the old old questions—"Who am I?" "What am I?" I, with these marvellous powers of thought, of memory, of reflection. What is this secret self that can love or hate, approve or condemn, hope or despair. This will that in its exercise may raise me almost to the dignity of a god or sink me to the level of a fiend.

Oh, young men and maidens? you and I, each one of us, living souls, in the presence of the ever living God this morning, may be assured that when God enriched us with this gift of life it was a precious, wondrous, priceless gift, not to be trifled with, never to be despised; but ever to be cherished and nourished to high end, holiest ends, ends in accordance with the Will Divine.

II. Life is wonderfully rich in possibilities.

What boundless possibilities of blessing and usefulness lie in a single life, who can tell? The resources of our life, the possible issues for good and ill, are boundless, exhaustless—I had almost said infinite. You walk out in the fields at morning-time, and there, nestling in the dewy grass, you see an acorn lie. That tiny bulb, lying all quiet and unnoticed there, will by-and-by become a sapling, and grow stronger and stronger, then an oak, and then ten thousand acorns will fall from its ample and far-spreading boughs; and so that single acorn we saw, gemmed with the morning dew, may become the father of wide-spreading forests. The one grain of corn cast into good soil will bring forth in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred-fold; the little seedling germ that tiny fingers cast in the fruitful earth with tremulous hope will bring forth ten thousand flowers. And be you sure, beloved, that all these things are but poor and imperfect parables of the possible issues of your life and mine. You remember what the martyr said as the faggots crackled round him, speaking to comfort his fellow-martyr, "Be of good cheer; we shall light such a candle in England to-day as will never go out." And every life here present in God's house this fair summer morning may be a light of love and gentleness and goodness sending its benign and gracious radiance far and wide—a light whose lustre years cannot dim, nor even the grave extinguish. It is a Divine inheritance, this life God has given us, containing the secret of a sublimer power than throned and sceptred kings have ever known! The poorest life has elements of majesty. The lowliest life has at its girdle the key that opens to royal chambers. Consecrated to the highest ends, to the glory of God and the well being of the teeming life around, God Himself only knows, and the great revealing day alone will declare what a boundless source of blessing one single life may be. I charge you, young men and maidens, think highly of this life of yours. When God made man, he made him in His own image; and when He gave us life, He gave us that which looks straight into the face of Omnipotence, and dares to climb upwards to solemn heights of awful power. As we go home this morning, let us go, blessing God for the rich possibilities of good

and usefulness and blessing with which He has been pleased to invest us. Above all, let us go praying that He will make each of our lives a fountain of sweet water, whence there shall flow grace and benediction to all around, in ever-widening, happy streams, on, and on, and on through all our years to the last; and, if God will, even far beyond.

The good begun by you shall onward flow Through many a branching stream, and wider grow.

The seed, Unsparing and unwearied cast, Shall deck the grave with a manthine flowers, And yield the fruits divine in heaven's immortal towers.

III. Life is a sacred stewardship.

It is not the young alone, but the mature and the aged, who need to be again and again reminded that life is not so much given as lent. Our being is not ours, but God's; our powers are not ours, but God's; our time is not ours, but God's. "May I not do what I will with mine own?" we often ask; but what is our own? We are not our own by nature, to say nothing of the deeper impress given to that truth by the gift of eternal grace. God has given us for a time this life, and has said:—"Use this for me. Here are ten talents, five, one; make the best of them, and by-and-by I will require an account." Let nothing, I beseech you, beguile you from the full acceptance of this simple, reasonable, scriptural truth. We hold our lives in fee, from a just, and merciful, and loving God. But He will demand an account. It is worse than idle to say, "I did not ask for talents, for life, for these illimitable powers." They are yours, and to quarrel with God's providence, and the unalterable facts of life, is as foolish as it is unwise and ungracious. It is a violation of a holy trust to disregard the solemn claims of stewardship. It is selfishness gross and ungrateful to use life for personal ends, forgetful that we are stewards of the Lord Most High. My life! my time! my talents! I have none. I myself am poor to utmost poverty. But I am rich in God! He has made me heir of all things, that I might glorify His name, and bless the world I tread.

IV. Life can be made glorious only through Jesus Christ.

To this thought I entreat your special attention. Now we have reached enchanted ground. All I have said before has its importance, but this is all important. This is the sum of all. This is the truth of truths. "To live is Christ." There is no real, true, full blessed life apart from Him. In Him is life. Whoso hath Christ hath life, rich, bounding, happy life! Would you know the secret of life? Go to Jesus, you will find those riches for yourself? His you to the Saviour; all fulness dwells in Him!—the fulness not of the vase that retains, but of the fountain that gives! gives! gives! Would you know the grace, and charm, and gentleness of life? Go to Jesus, and His gentleness shall make you great.

Are you ambitious (and ambition is not a sin) that your life should be rich in noble deeds and high renown? then Go to God's dear Son and He will show you how to make your life sublime by lowliest service. He will send you about doing good. He will fill you with His own all-constraining love. He will inspire you with His zeal. He will make your poor broken life a tower of immortal strength, a thing of heavenly beauty, a joy of many generations. Oh! brethren beloved! Forget all else I have said, count all other things trifling and vain as compared with this, Christ, and Christ alone, can make life glorious. You may dig and dig, and prune, and watch, and water the garden plot of your life to little purpose. The weeds will choke the flowers and the whole place will be desert. But give it into the hands of Christ! He is the true husbandman, and soon you shall see your little plot blossoming like the garden of the Lord.

Your mind reverts betimes, I doubt not, to the noble and excellent of the earth; the living and the dead. What was the patent of their nobility? What was the secret of their excellence? The one answer is, they were followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. From the Apostle of the Gentiles downward through all the shining ranks of those whose lives have illumined the dark pages of human history; the heroism of the martyr, the zeal of the sufferer, the thousand excellencies that have enriched the earth are all to be accounted for by this one phrase: "The life I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

V. And now last of all, let me press upon you with all brotherly affection the personal aspect of this question:—What is your life?

Do not ask in the spirit of inquisitive dictation, Is your life what it ought to be? God forbid! "My hands are very sinful; very sinful is my speech." I come to plead with you. I do not ask, Is your life what it ought to be; what your conscience and your judgment alike declare it should be. But friend, dear friend, is your life what you yourself would have it be? Let your heart's whispers be heard before God this morning. If we could but read each other's hearts, the records would be strange and wonderful. But I verily believe that deep down in every heart would be found strong desires for better things, for higher, holier things. Well, but Christ is here, and He knows all, and reads every heart, not in careless haste, but He searches and ponders page and paragraph, line and letter, and with His own loving interpretation hails with joy each sign of grace. And he says to you this morning in order that your life may be beautiful, "Give me thy heart." Oh, respond, respond, I entreat you, respond without delay!

What time so opportune as this fair Summer Sabbath morning? Oh! give yourselves to Christ now! and you shall go forth from God's house with summer in your souls and heaven in your hearts, and your pathway shall lead through lines of light to everlasting day.

Life is beautiful; its duties Cluster round us day by day, Whose sweet and solemn voices Warn to watch, and work, and pray.

Only they its blessings forfeit, Who by sin their spirits cheat; And to slothful stupor yielding, Let the rust their armour eat.

Life is beautiful with promise Of a life that cannot fade; Life is awful with the threatening Of an everlasting shade.

Let no thoughtless wanderer scorn it, Blindly lost in folly's maze, Duty, love, and hope adorn it, Let its every breath be praise.

Foreign Missions.

BANGKOK.

(Concluded)

Not far from this town we saw the place where the dead bodies of convicts are thrown, to be devoured by vultures and dogs. There was one body lying there at the time, over which several dogs and perhaps fifty vultures were fighting. There was another body lying close by, ready to be thrown in. The vultures, of which there were at least a hundred around in the trees, were most loathsome looking birds. Altogether this was the most horrible sight I ever beheld. Near by was the place where the bodies of the poor are burned, and another place where persons of the royal family are burned. All except the convicts are burned before they are buried. There is an inclosure here, where in the cholera season, when the dead are too numerous to be burned, the bodies are thrown together in a heap and allowed to moulder away. There are also little bamboo huts where sick persons are brought, and left till they die, without any care. The whole place is horrible, and it was a relief to get away from it.

Leaving this place we crossed the river, and visited another temple, called Wat Chang. This is a large place, and has a greater number of images than the last one, around the narrow yard are at least two hundred figures, carved from granite or freestone. Some of them represent Chinese mandarins; some, European officers, mounted on horses; some are dogs—hogs—horses—and some are hobgoblins, such as never existed anywhere but in the mind of a Chinese artist. Around the walls of the outer building are painted representations of the different punishments which those who are not good Buddhists have to undergo after death. They are represented as being sawn in pieces—burned—hanged—torn in pieces—left to starve—eaten by animals—and subjected to whatever horrible punishment the fancy of a heathen familiar with cruelty, could suggest. In nearly every case Buddha is represented as sitting or standing near, without any ability or disposition to help the sufferer. This is a perfect commentary on the whole system of Buddhism. There is no one to help. Each one is responsible for himself. If he lives rightly, well;—if he sins, he must bear the penalty himself; there is no forgiveness of sin, or possibility of escape from punishment.

In the inclosure at Wat Chang is a very high pagoda. This we ascended part of the way, perhaps a hundred feet, and had a good view of the river and city. Then, coming down, we re-crossed the river, and visited a large temple just inside the city walls, called Wat Pok. There is here an immense reclining image, nearly the whole length of the temple, and it is said to be one hundred and forty feet long, and large in proportion. It represents Buddha as resting. It is built of brick and mortar, cemented over, and covered completely with gold leaf. The soles of the feet, which are nine or ten feet long, are beautifully inlaid with mother of pearl. Into this temple the king dares not enter, as there is a tradition that if he does so the image will fall upon him and crush him.

One day last week Captain Ames took us in his boat down the river to a place called Pak Lat. This is a long point of land, almost an isthmus, formed by a sudden bend in the river to the East, and another as sudden bend back again to the West. This point is five or six miles long, while from one end in the river to the other is only two miles. Across the neck of this point a canal has been cut, through which boats always pass, and at some seasons small steamers, thereby saving twelve miles of the distance to Paknam. On this canal is a large temple, nicely kept. One of the principal objects of interest here is the representation of the footprint of Buddha. This is nearly four feet long, and eighteen inches wide, and is beautifully inlaid with mother of pearl. There is also a reclining image here, thirty-nine feet long. There is another image, in a sitting position, in a temple up the river, which I have since visited, that is said to be sixty feet high. As we go about and see these great idols, and temples, and throngs of people visiting them, we cannot but feel how great is the work of leading them to hear and accept the gospel of salvation by faith, instead of works.

We are getting comfortably settled and becoming somewhat accustomed to the ways of Bangkok life. There are some things peculiar to this city; as for instance, the way of procuring water. There are no wells in the city, as the ground is so low and swampy that the water in them would be worthless. So those who have houses with tiled roofs catch and store away in large earthen jars enough rain water during some rainy season to last them till the next, for drinking purposes. Water for other purposes is brought from the river. Those who have not tiled roofs get nearly all their water from the river. At one season this does very well, but most of the year it is quite discoloured with mud, and it is as much as one can do to drink it, when he remembers that the river is the common receptacle for all the filth of the city. It is a common thing to see dead bodies of animals, completely putrid, floating down the stream. And yet the natives drink this water freely, close to the edges of the river where it is quite thick with filth. The wonder is that they do not all die of cholera.

There has been some cholera this season, and it is not quite done yet. Chek Prea, one of Dr. Dean's Chinese servants, died of it the week before last. This will be sad news to the Doctor, who is still in Singapore. He expects to return to Bangkok the first of May. As soon as he returns and I can get some further information I will endeavor to write something of the prospects which Siam offers as a mission field.

This letter will probably reach you about the commencement of our Associational gatherings, at which I trust your missionaries will be remembered and prayed for. We have not heard from home now for many weeks. I trust when we do hear again that we shall hear of a good work of grace among our churches. I hope there will be more cheering reports sent in by the churches to the Association this year than last. And as his people meet in their yearly gatherings, may the Master meet with them, and bless them, and guide them in all their deliberations!

I wish your missionaries had something more encouraging to write—something of work accomplished, or of work definitely laid out for the future. But our brethren must be patient with us, and we will try to go as fast as the way opens before us.

We are at work at the languages that we shall probably need in the future. We here in Bangkok are doing a little at Siamese.

We do not suffer much from the heat. The thermometer stands at from 80 to 90 in our rooms. We enjoy good health so far, and are quite satisfied with our life here.

Very truly yours, G. CHURCHILL.

The Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, N. S., AUGUST 6, 1874.

A correspondent, in a note to which the initials "J. H. S." are appended, asks "how can Baptists be supporters of the non-sectarian school law, and at the same time take state pay for the support of their denominational schools." This is a fair question. The existing state of things is easily explained, and the course for the future is clear.

Acadia College now receives the small grant of four hundred dollars a year from the Provincial Treasury, the same being made to several other colleges, as the result of what is called the Dalhousie compromise. A great number of the people held that the Government in existence some ten years ago, exceeded the just exercise of power in making over certain public funds to the control of a private corporation. The Government felt the pressure of public opinion to such a degree that they proposed to give satisfaction by making additional grants to certain other bodies. The friends of Acadia were not satisfied with the proposal and never accepted it as final.

The authorities of the College have taken the appropriation, not because they wished it, but rather to keep alive a formal recognition of the fact that the Government had admitted that a certain piece of legislation was open to just objection. So far as we know, the Governors of Acadia, and leading Baptists in all parts of the province, are in favor of withdrawing public grants from all the colleges. Whenever a political leader shall arise with courage sufficient to make this demand, they will be ready to sustain him. The columns of the Messenger have frequently called attention to the fact, that the present condition of things in connection with the College grants is not satisfactory. The simplest and fairest course will be to withhold them altogether and leave all the colleges to take care of themselves.

The case of Horton Academy is different. If it were a private school, the grant ought to be withdrawn. But it is recognized as connected with the public school system of the province. It is classed among the special academies, and receives its grant as such.—The relations between it and the schools of the county have not been completely adjusted; but we are informed that this is not by any fault of the directors of the Academy. They have on several occasions formally declared that whenever the authorities of the section, or of the county, will make provision for at least part of the rent of the premises occupied by the Academy, they will be willing to enter on some plan by which these authorities shall have an equitable share in the management of the school, and to admit pupils from the county, of suitable qualifications, without payment of tuition fees. This seems to us reasonable, inasmuch as the building, apparatus and furniture now used by the Academy are all private property, and all repairs and additions are made from private sources. The directors of the Academy may, if they choose, make it a private school, that is, make it subject to their exclusive control. In that case they will relinquish the public grant. If the grant is continued, the school must be kept really and faithfully in connection with the system of public schools, subject to the inspection of the school authorities and to all the regulations of the Department of Education, that may be applicable to it. Either of the courses may be consistently adopted.

Another view of this subject is taken by some. They say that no public grant should be made to any society for educational purposes, on the ground that its members belong to any body of Christians. No public money should be given for any denominational purpose. But if it is right to endow a private railway company, for example, with hundreds and thousands of acres of the best land in the province, at the public expense, because the road will be of public utility in developing the resources of the country and enhancing the value of private property; the same reasons would justify the Government in endowing an educational institution, of a definite character, with a large capital, or a fixed annual in-

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