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Poetry.

His Benefits.

PSALM ciii. 2.

Uncounted as the stars that thread the darkness
With interlacing rays,—
They brighten in our lives; we feel their beauty,
And yet forget to praise.

Father in Heaven, forgive, and for these blessings,
These benefits of thine,
Give grateful hearts, that shall rejoice in sunshine;
In shadow not repine.

Beneath the drooping cloud the grain is ripening
For garners in the sky;
Forget not that He watches till the harvest
With never slumbering eye.

Never a soul has yet been found so lonely
But had some blessing left;
Never a heart entirely forsaken
And of all life bereft.

Then, O my soul, recount the benefits
God-given to thy lot,
And never more, however sharp the trial,
Let them be quite forgot.
GEORGIE L. HEATH.

Religious.

Mannerism in Prayer.

BY REV. WOOSTER PARKER.

It is curious to notice how Christians of different denominations fall into different habits and expressions, and the use of different phrases and tones of voice in prayer. In a union prayer-meeting, a stranger can tell where each one belongs, just as he can tell what animals are in the farmer's yard, by hearing them. In many cases the denomination is indicated more certainly than the Christian. There is a great difference between simply praying and making a prayer.

Some prayers are awfully solemn; some are frivolous; some are chaste and decorous in language; some are almost ludicrous. The good Methodist brother is fervid, impulsive, jerky, and comes suddenly to a stop. The Congregationalist or Baptist is slow, comparatively unemotional, reverent in tone; a very proper, well-voiced prayer. Some seem to begin their prayer at no particular point, and some seem to begin in the middle and leave off at both ends, or nowhere. Some ring out the amen strongly and distinctly, as if it were the principal thing—perhaps it often is—and others leave it off entirely, as if afraid to utter so solemn a word. Sometimes I hear a prayer in what seems to be great earnestness and warmth of feeling, in very moving, affected tones of voice, or in the language of great humility; when I can but question whether the unction is not all in the tones and inflections of the voice, or whether the humility is not in the bend of the knees.

But I wonder who invented the old, puritan, orthodox, way of ending every public prayer, and for aught I know, private prayers, always with a set and solemn doxology or ascription—or rather with a condition and solemn promise to pay the good Lord so and so—"O Lord, give us so and so; O Lord, do this or that for us, and we will give thee . . ."

Months ago a stranger came into our prayer-meeting, and he prayed in such tones and phrases as made it seem to every one that he was a Methodist, or that he was not a Congregationalist.

On another evening another man came in, and talked and prayed in such a simple and sincere way as showed that he was a warm-hearted Christian, acquainted with our Master, and that the good Lord was accustomed to listen to him and communicate with him. We were glad and thankful, but we did not know, and nobody asked, what church he belonged to.

The best prayer-meetings I ever attended were those where the Christian spirit was so manifested that no one could tell, and no one cared to know, what denomination he belonged to. Far enough would I be from commending strained, startling eccentricities in prayer, either in thought or expression, but I fear that some do not think enough of the importance of a chaste, simple, and appropriate manner in prayer.

Walking with God.

A man who has, from day to day and from month to month, ordinarily, in his life no inner consciousness of the presence of God, may be said practically to have no God. In so far as his own mind is concerned he has banished Him. He is worse than an atheist—worse, I mean, in the court of the finer feelings, though he may not be worse in the courts of logic and philosophy. An atheist does not believe that there is a God—as a personal experience, at any rate—and therefore he does not cast Him out; but there are those who have a feeling that there is a God, but who never invite Him in.

Now, there is a danger that this kind of practical atheism will bring down on the heads of many persons, and persons who are professors of religion more woe than if they were to go without God absolutely. For those who are careless there is one step up, but it is not a very great improvement. Yes, it is, too. Anything is better than indifference and death, which are apt to go with using God professionally.

There are some persons whom you never visit unless you want something. If you go to a lawyer's office it is because you need his legal advice. If you go to see a doctor it is because you are in need of his skill. You go to an engineer, not on account of what he is personally, but for professional reasons. On the other hand, you have friends that you go to not because they are merchants, or lawyers, or physicians, or ministers, or this, and that the other thing, but because they are your friends. It is their personal disposition which you want to rejoice in, and which kindles pleasurable emotions in yourself. In such higher friendships are the most exquisite experiences of life.

How many of us are there who realize the old phrase, "He walked with God;" who live with him in a kind of whispering communion all the time? Where persons love very deeply, so that the heart longs continually for the company of the loved, unselfishly desiring them to feel and see and hear whatever they feel and see and hear saying, "I wish he were with me to see this; I would like to know what he would say and do," the experience is not unfamiliar to you. Parents have it, and children have it. That is the ground of home-sickness when persons go away from home for any length of time.

There is just this kind of feeling between the soul and God. There is a kind of growing thought of God with us, heightening the brightness of the brightest light, and refining the highest joy, and striking through the deepest sorrows the most comforting hope. It is possible for persons to have this experience more or less deeply, and to carry it all the time with them, so that if you ask them, "Why do you have these thoughts of God?" they reply, "Because it is sweeter to have them than to have any other thoughts; there is nothing so good to my soul as communion with my Father and with my friends in heaven."

There are a great many who never have it, but who, when they are in perplexity and do not know what to do, kindle some realization of God in order to ask his advice or succor. When they are brought into great stress they go to God; but they have not a vivid sense of him. They make simply a professional use of God. If they would speak the truth they would say, "Lord I have not spoken a word to thee for six months, and it often seems to me as though I had never heard of thee;

but now I am at the point of despair, and there is no way in which I can help myself, and nobody appears inclined to help me: wilt thou help me?"

Well, must not a soul do that? Oh, yes, it is better that one should do that than do nothing; a great deal better; but is that all that one should do? Is it generous? Is it not exquisite selfishness? Ought there not to be an experience on the part of men and women of communion with God that should live from day to day, from week to week and from month to month? Ought there not to be some such savor, some such gladness, in their experience as that they should have something to testify?

You remember the surprise that once in a while overwhelmed Christ. You remember how, when he had healed the ten lepers, and they found themselves healed, and he said to them, "Go, show these things," according to the old Jewish method, nine of them walked off having got what they wanted, saying, "Why should we speak of them?" But there was one of them who had a heart in him; and he came back to give thanks; and it surprised the Lord; and he said, "Were there not ten? Where are the nine? Has only this one come back to give thanks?" Is not the story repeated in every church, in every age, continuously: ten will be healed, and one will remember it and go back and give thanks, and make known on every side what God has done for him?

What a comfort it would be if there were such a testimony of God's dealings with us; if we walked with him day by day; if our experiences in communion with him were sweet, and if we were conscious that the inspiration of our best thoughts and purposes in life came directly from the bosom of God, and we could make it known to other men! What a power would go with our presence! What an influence it would exert upon the imagination, the judgment and the sense of men! How useful it would be! A man who speaks as out of the very presence of God has a power and an influence in everything he says which can come from no mere argument or intellectual force.

When Moses came down from the mountain his face shone. Every man's face shines when he has really been up in the mountain and talked with God. When the old desires in the hearts of men are subdued by the presence of God, they carry something with them all the time which cannot be feigned, and for which there can be no substitute or equivalent. There is but one thing which is sufficient for all the exigencies of life, and that is living in personal, thoughtful, conscious communion with God, every day and continually, because it is sweeter and better to us than anything else. I do not mean every single hour, because that is not in the nature of the mind; but as continually as we live in the thought of the best friends we have, or in the thought of those purposes of our life which are dearest to us.—*Christian Union.*

Sweeping a Sunbeam.

It was a busy day with me. Morning "chores" in abundance, lunch-baskets to prepare for school, little faces and hands to wash, refractory hooks, missing buttons, knotted strings, all to be fixed at the moment. Fretful baby to quiet and amuse, an early dinner to get, tea to be arranged for afternoon company at the shortest notice, house to be set in order to receive them, and worse than all, as a sharp goad in the side, under all this burden, lay that easily besetting but carefully concealed sin, the determination that everything should be done with just so much nicety and exactness as I deemed essential to "good housekeeping."

Surely never before was baby half so irritable as this day! Never half so unwilling to sit upon the carpet and please himself. I had some misgivings as I remembered the difficulty with which he had cut the former teeth, and

the possibility of a return of the convulsions. But he was apparently well now, and how many items in the order and arrangement of my house must I neglect if I gave my time to him?

And the rest of the children, too—it did seem as if they never would get off to school. Books mislaid, late lost, an excuse wanted for a deficient composition! I thought Job certainly had never tried a mother's perplexities when he won the palm for patience.

At length—although fatigued, heated, and restless in spirit—all was completed. Each room had received the last touch, every desired arrangement had been brought about, even baby had dropped into a quiet sleep. Before the arrival of my guests, and for a short interval, I was conscious of one of those pauses in which the soul is ready to speak. Just then, walking slowly across the room to replace a broom which had been in use, I observed a shred, a hair-like string, lying across the carpet. Surprised that even this small remnant of untidiness should be left where I thought all in order, I paused and set about removing the intruder. I swept, but it remained. Stooping down for I was near-sighted, to pick it up with my fingers, I found it—a sunbeam! A tiny, sweet beam had stolen between the darkened blinds and actually nestled in the carpet, where bustle and hurry and annoyances had banished every vestige of sunshine from the heart! A light from that peaceful sunbeam shone into my deepest soul as if it were a lightning flash that had poured in upon me.

In my blind nicety I had been trying to sweep away a sunbeam from the carpet! Oh, how many bright beams had I on that very day swept and washed and cleaned out of my house! The faces of my little children peered up from the ray on the floor, and—how they did plead to a mother's heart. The soothing, forbearing tone with which my husband had met the fretful complaints of the morning—this, too, spoke out from the little sunbeam! I quivered under the sound of it. No angry reproof could have pierced my heart with half so many sorrows! As all my folly and ingratitude stood unmasked before me, my anguish was inexpressible. Sinking into a chair, I buried my face in my hands, and while the scalding tears flowed, such prayers went up from my aching heart as I trust have never been forgotten or lost.

How trifling, how unworthy now appeared the vain emulation which so constantly spurred me to endure labors. Every household article might shine by the toils of neatness, but how was my soul day by day darkening with impatience, complaints, and unthankfulness. How small a matter in the sight of God, and now in my own sight, was the envied reputation of a housekeeper in comparison with that gentle patience, that loving sympathy and aid which my children required and deserved at my hands. I longed for their return from school that I might begin to retrieve my injustice to them. Peace, sweet peace, how had I shut it out of my heart, shut it from my family, ah, how busy had I been sweeping it all away!

I love the remembrance of that gentle monitor, the sweet little sunbeam! I date a renewed existence from the day it strayed so unbidden into my parlor. I would devote my energies to a life that is satisfying and eternal, rather than aim to deserve ever so well the applause of friends for its own sake. I even question any virtue in that degree of household order, neatness, or taste, which has become so absorbing and exacting as to render the little kindnesses and charities of our home-life interruptions of our main plan, or which has usurped the chief place in our estimate of domestic duties, or which, if our actions are to judge us, would seem to constitute the most necessary item of our personal happiness and comfort.—*Christian Weekly.*

Always be more solicitous to preserve your innocence than concerned to prove it.

She will need them no more.

Some days since a man noticed a ragged little bootblack culling some bright blossoms from a bruised and faded bouquet which a chambermaid had thrown from a chamber window into the alley.

"What are you doing with that bouquet, my lad?" asked the man.

"Nawthin," was the lad's reply, as he kept on at his work.

"But do you love flowers so well that you are willing to pick them out of the mud?"

"I s'pose that's my bizness, an' none o' yourn."

"Oh, certainly, but you surely cannot expect to sell those faded flowers?"

"Sell 'em! who wants to sell 'em? I'm goin' to take 'em to Lil."

"Oh, oh! Lil is your sweetheart, I see."

"No, Lil is not my sweetheart; she's my sick sister," said the boy, as his eyes flashed and his dirty chin quivered.

"Lil's been sick for a long time, an' lately she talks of nothin, but flowers an' birds, but mother tole me this mornin' that Lil would die b-b-before the birds and flowers came back."

The boy burst into tears.

"Come with me to the florist's, and your sister shall have a nice bouquet."

The little fellow was soon bounding home with his treasure. Next day he appeared and said:

"I came to thank you, sir, for Lil. That bouquet done her so much good, and she hugged and hugged it till she set herself a-coughing again. She says she'll come bime-by and work for you, soon's she gets well."

An order was sent to the florist to give the boy every other day a bouquet for Lil.

It was only the day before yesterday that the bootblack appeared again. He stepped inside the office door and said:

"Thank you, sir, but Lil—Lil (tears were streaming from his eyes) won't need—the flowers any more."

He went quickly away, but his brief words had told the story. Lil won't need the flowers any more, but they will grow above her and the birds will sing around her just the same.—*Detroit Press.*

HAVE MORE SUNSHINE.—Sunshine in the house—sunshine in the heart! No one can over-estimate the value of either. What the world wants to-day is more sunshine in its disposition, in its business, in its charities, in its theologies, and, queer as it may seem, in even its pleasures. For ten thousand of the aches and pains, and irritations of men and women, nothing can be better than sunshine. It soothes better than morphine. It stimulates better than champagne. It is the best plaster for a wound. The good Samaritan poured into the fallen traveller's wounds more of this than of oil. Florence Nightingale used it on Crimean battlefields. You cannot have too much of it, or use it too freely. It is good at all times, and on all occasions. Take it into all the alleys, down into all the cellar-ways, up into the dilapidated garrets; take it into the prisons and poorhouses; take it on all the ships; carry it beside all the sick beds. There can be no place on all the broad earth where its light might not fall and do good. Don't be afraid to have too much of it. Take not a vialful, not a cupful, not a decanterful, but a soul-full. It is good for spleen, for liver complaint, for neuralgia, for rheumatism; it is good for falling fortunes, for envy, discontent, for depression of mind, for melancholy. Doubtless we shall find hereafter that heaven is full of sunshine.—*Religious Herald.*

TIME-SERVERS.—The trimming, hesitating policy of many reminds us of Luther's words to Erasmus: "You desire to walk upon egg without crushing them, and among glasses without breaking them!" This is a difficult game to play at, and one which is more suitable for a clown at a theatre than a servant of Christ. When you are attempting a compromise, you have to