

At the Portal

BY F. R. HAVERGAL. Standing at the portal Of the opening year, Words of comfort meet us, Hushing every fear; Spoken through the silence, By our Father's voice, Tender, strong and faithful, Making us rejoice: "I, the Lord, am with thee— Be thou not afraid; I will help and strengthen— Be thou not dismayed! Yes, I will uphold thee, With my own right hand; Thou art called and chosen, In my sight to stand. For the year before us, Oh, what rich supplies! For the poor and needy, Living streams shall rise; For the sad and sinful, Shall his grace abound; For the faint and feeble, Perfect strength be found. He will never fail us, He will not forsake; His eternal covenant He will never break, Resting on his promises, What have we to fear? God is all sufficient, For the coming year.

Christ the Head of the Church.

Why did God say that Christ was the head to the church, which was his body? In the first place, the head is the seat of government, so far as the body is concerned. It is an indication of a diseased spiritual condition when the church is not, through and through, governed by Christ. What a mighty work the church might accomplish through the power of God if it should awaken to the glorious truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is head over all. Christ, as the head of the church, is the seat of wisdom. What a glorious thought that all the wisdom locked up in the eternal being of Jehovah is ours! Suppose it were possible for the various members of the body to act independently, of the headship. Suppose my right foot were to walk, my left foot to dance, my right hand to write a sermon, and my left hand to play the banjo, I should at least make a very suspicious looking figure. Many a church in the sight of God's angels is just as ridiculous as that. In how many churches you find that, instead of every organization being guided by Christ's wisdom and working in harmony, every member is pulling his own way. Again, the head is the seat of the consciousness of joy and pain! What a comfort to feel that, however small the position we hold, Christ feels our joy and pain! In the physical body sometimes the brain gets out of order, needs sleep, so that it does not warn us of danger. But Christ never sleeps.—A. S. Gumbart.

Faith in Ice.

A convert came to a missionary on the West Coast of Africa, and said: "Teacher, what liars these sailors are! Why, one of them told me to-day that up in his country, at the time of year when it is hottest down here, water becomes solid and they walk across the rivers just as we walk on the land. I can't believe any such yarns as that, and I told him so. Then he said, 'Go ask your teacher.'" What should the missionary do? He could not explain to that untutored savage the law according to which liquids are solidified by cold. He could not even make him understand what cold was. And yet he must not tell him a lie. The savage had faith in him, had believed the gospel story when he told it, and had accepted the unseen Christ as his Saviour. So he replied: "Brother, what the sailor told you about water becoming ice is true. I have seen it. I have walked on it. This is a big world that we live in, and there are a great many things in the different parts of it. You must not think that it is everywhere just as it is here on the Gaboon." The dusky listener looked at his teacher at first with wonder. He could hardly believe that he heard aright. Then, as one waking from a dream, he cried: "If you say it is so, it must be so. I know that you are wise and good. You would not, you could not, deceive me. Strange as it seems, unreasonable, incredible, I will doubt no longer. I am certain now that there is a place where water becomes ice and men can walk on it." Now, that converted African was right in taking the word of the missionary. He had such faith in him that he could not doubt the truth of anything he taught, no matter how strange and even impossible it seemed. And yet there are men who will not believe God unless they can comprehend and demonstrate the truth of what he says. There is nothing so unreasonable as the rationalism of conceited skeptics.—Herald and Presbyter.

The Test.

There are times in the life of most people who profess Christianity when there come doubts as to whether they are living up to the standard laid down in the Bible. For myself, I have written down the following questions, and find it a good plan: Do I love God with all my heart, soul and strength? Am I willing to leave all and follow him? Have I the faith in Christ which enables me, in times of trouble and affliction, to look up and say, "Not my will, but thine be done?" Do I keep the commandments? Do I do good as I have opportunity? Do I search the Scriptures daily to see what the Lord would have me to do? Can I claim the precious promises? Do I cherish a kind, forgiving spirit toward my enemies, and love my neighbor? Do I consider it a pleasure, as well as a duty, to do all I can for the cause of Christ? Am I keeping myself pure and unspotted from the world? Do I thank God morning, noon, and night, and at all times cherish a spirit of thankfulness for the blessings I have? If, when the evening of each day comes, I can conscientiously answer, I do, as far as in me lies, asking God to pardon my weakness and omissions, and to give me greater strength and desire to learn his will, I feel the sweet assurance that it will be given me as I ask it. Then, as I lie down upon my couch to sleep, I feel that, whether I wake in this world or not, "all will be well."—Herald and Presbyter.

How to Make a Congregation Tired.

In these days much is said against long sermons. But there are other ways of tiring a congregation besides long sermons. Here are a few: 1. Do not begin the services till half an hour after the time appointed. 2. Make a long string of announcements, and supplement each with a tedious explanation or exhortation. 3. Sing long, lifeless hymns in a long-drawn out tone, and make prayer tedious, circumlocutory, formal, long and spiritless. 4. After the sermon sing another long, lifeless hymn, and offer another patience-exhausting prayer. 5. Then, when the people feel quite hopeful that you are about to dismiss them give a ten minutes' talk on the importance of all being present promptly at the next meeting. 6. Then ask if there are any other announcements to be made, and, after waiting two minutes without any response, sail in on a talk about "the blessed time we have had together," occupying five minutes more. 7. Then give a little more talk—and talk—and talk—and at last pronounce a long drawn out benediction.

The Best Thing to Have.

A Christian character—Christlikeness, Godlikeness, the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord—is the best possession a man can have. It is best for himself, best for his kindred and friends, best for the world. No other possession is as satisfactory. Joined as it is with the infirmities of human nature and therefore being in conflict within the man himself, being progressive, going on from strength to strength, it is not wholly satisfactory; but the possessor is more thankful for what he has of it than for anything else. Money, power, social distinction, scholarship, a great reputation for qualities, attainments and achievements lauded by the world at large, do not gratify, and cannot, as does the enjoyment of the character the Bible commends. Wrong thinking, feeling and doing cloud the lustre of all other possessions, beget self-contempt, self-upbraiding, self-condemnation. Wrong doing is the bitter herb in the cup of life; the burden which oppresses and wears; the soul sickness which no human skill can cure. Without Christian character there is but one permanent relief from the depression, the shame and contempt of evil deeds, and that is the searing of conscience and hardening of the heart and the possession of the soul with a strong delusion to believe a lie. That is the worst fate which can befall a man. It is this, if

anything, which can make angels weep over a man. It moved Jesus Christ to lamentation.

Six Short Life Rules.

Never neglect daily private prayer; and when you pray, remember that God is present, and that he hears your prayers. (Heb. 11: 6.) Never neglect daily private Bible reading; and when you read, remember that God is speaking to you, and that you are to believe and act upon what he says. I believe all backsliding begins with the neglect of these two rules. (John 5: 36.) Never let a day pass without trying to do something for Jesus. Every night reflect on what Jesus has done for you, and then ask yourself: "What am I doing for Him?" (Matt. 5: 13-16.) If ever you are in doubt as to a thing being right or wrong, go to your room, kneel down and ask God's blessing upon it. (Col. 3: 17.) If you cannot do this, it is wrong.—(Rom. 14: 23.) Never take your Christianity from Christians, or argue that because such and such people do so and so, therefore you may. (2 Cor. 10: 12.) You are to ask yourself: "How would Christ act in my place?" and strive to do as he would do. (John 10: 27.) Never believe what you feel, if it contradicts God's Word; ask yourself: "Can what I feel be true, if God's Word is true?" and if both cannot believe God and make your own heart the liar. (Rom. 3: 4; 1 John 5: 10, 11.)

How to Encourage People.

It is a great art to know how to administer encouragement wisely. Perhaps the best you can do for any one who is in perplexity and difficulty is to manifest your faith in him. The secret of discouragement is self-distrust. The man thinks that he has done all he can, or fears that he will fail. The friend who shows that he believes in him, sends him away with new inspiration and confidence. It is a capital mistake to seek to encourage people by underrating their trials. You say to your friends, "Oh, that is nothing at all; you can do that easily enough;" and you have made his burden heavier. The difficulty is a real one to him. You can not help him until you take his point of view, and see how hard the conditions are in his conception of them. Then you can encourage him, and you will do it by telling him that you understand the difficulty, but you believe that he can conquer it. Then you have appealed to the man within the man. He knows that some one understands him, and the next time you meet him, he will say by his glowing face: "I thank you! It was hard, but I did it. I did it because you believed in me, and that made me believe in myself."—The Watchman.

Rest in Christ.

A poor English girl in a home in Paris, ill in body and hopeless in spirit, was greatly affected by hearing some children singing, "I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Come unto Me, and rest.'" When they came to the words, "Weary and worn and sad," she said, "That's me, that's me! What did he do? Fill it up, fill it up!" She never rested till she heard the whole of the hymn, which tells how Jesus gives rest to such. By and by she asked, "Is that true?" On being told "Yes" she asked, "Have you come to Jesus? Has he given you rest?" "He has." Raising herself, she asked, "Do you mind my coming close to you? Maybe it would be easier to go to Jesus with one who has been before than to go alone." So saying she nestled her head on the shoulder of her who watched, and clutching her as one in the agony of death, she murmured, "Now try and take me with you to Jesus." Their voices joined in prayer. The presence of Jesus filled her heart, and she had rest and peace.

"Ye Are Not Your Own."

Perhaps in the longer or shorter time that Adam and Eve occupied Paradise they congratulated themselves by calling it their garden. God never gave it to them. He never made it over to them, any more than He made over to you the plot of ground that you call your garden. The phrase by which the case is stated in the second chapter of Genesis is worth attending to: "The Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." There is nothing there about God's deeding the Garden to him or even giving it to him. He never gives anything to anybody, for that would be to surrender His own title, to abandon His own ownership, which He never does. So that, so far as all matters of property relation

are concerned, our attitude toward God is the attitude of a slave to a master. In a word, we are God's slaves.—C. H. Parkhurst, D. D.

A Neglected Duty.

No man has any right to manage his affairs in such a way that his sudden death would bring burdens and losses on other people. There may be rare cases where a man really cannot help entanglements, or where from inexperience or lack of judgment, he has brought his affairs into such a state that the interests of others depend upon his life; but he should make all possible haste to extricate himself from such a position. Honor and honesty demand that he should so conduct his business that his death should cause no one to be wronged. And as to dying, although all men everywhere believe that every other man will surely die, yet they unite in thinking that they themselves are exceptions to this rule; or at least, they act as if they thought so. This is radically wrong. It is every man's duty in every transaction in life, to be influenced by the fact that at any day or at any hour he may die.—The Christian.

Christ Every Day.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D. The periodical piety that goes by the calendar, and only serves the Lord Jesus at set times and places, is of very little value; it is only a perennial piety that possesses both peace and power. He is the only healthy Christian who runs his Christianity through all the routine of his every-day experiences. Some people keep their religion, as they do their umbrellas, for stormy weather, and hope to have it within easy reach if a dangerous sickness overtakes them. Others, and quite too many, reserve their piety for the Sabbath and the sanctuary, and on Monday they fold it up and lay it away with their Sunday clothes. A healthy, vigorous, cheerful, working religion cannot be maintained on Sabbaths and songs and sacraments; every day has got to be a "Lord's day" if we expect to make any real headway heavenward. I have observed that those who try to live by fits and frames and feelings are never fruitful Christians.

What Made Us Leave Off?

Said a father to me (relates the Rev. F. B. Meyer), speaking of his little son: "There was a time when I made up my mind that as sometimes I had freedom of speech in family worship and sometimes I didn't, that I would only hold it when I felt moved especially by the Spirit to do so. So night came and we went to bed without it. "My little Joe was then scarcely three years old. But he seemed restless and uneasy. At length he turned over to me, and, putting his arms around my neck, his baby voice lisped, 'Papa.' "What is it, my son? "We used to say 'Our Father,' didn't we? "Yes, dear; go to sleep." A pause. "Papa," again came the lisping tone, 'what made we leave off? "You may be sure," said the father, "it was the last time we went to bed without family prayer."

Begin Now.

The Christian who is constantly waiting for great opportunities to do good will never be anything more than an unprofitable servant. J. Hudson Taylor tells of a young Christian who had received Christ as his Saviour, but who said to the missionary that he would wait until he learned more about him before making a public profession. "Well," said Mr. Taylor, "I have a question to ask you. When you light a candle, do you light it to make the candle more comfortable?" "Certainly not," said the other, "but in order that it may give more light." "When it is half burnt down, do you expect that it will first become useful?" "No, as soon as I light it." "Very well," said the missionary promptly; "go thou and do likewise; begin at once."

THE SOUL OF MAN is like a ruined tower, and awaits the restoring touch of the original architect. It is like a disarranged piece of music, and only the great Harmonizer can bring discord out of its jangles. It is like a wilted plant, but the divine Gardener can refresh its roots and renew its vigor. All that is implied in the Psalmist's glad confession: "He restoreth my soul." All about us are these ruined souls. What is emphatically needed is the more general preaching and living of the Gospel of the Restoration.—New York Observer.

Bewitched By Appearances.

How easily we are bewitched by the appearance of things! We walk in a vain show. We are deceived by badges, uniforms, insignias, tags, labels—by the outward trappings and trimmings. Let us try to get below the accident of appearances and try to find the fundamentals and realities. The rich man of Jesus' parable was stripped of all that he had, and stood out a beggar and a fool in the light of eternity. They took away everything from Jesus, even his garments, but he stood out, not merely the King of the Jews, but of earth and heaven.—Sunday School Times.

The Divine Paradox.

This is the paradox of experience—that the way to bear one's burdens is to add to them the bearing of some one else's. The way out of your own trial is by entering into the trials of others. The introspective and self-absorbed sorrow grows heavier the longer you watch it, and the self-forgetting service of another lightens the burden which you yourself have to bear. The more you shirk, the more you have to bear. The more you add of others responsibilities, the more you subtract from your own.—F. G. Peabody.

Be patient with the faults of others, remembering that you may have a greater fault. Men are not always made strong by adverse criticism, but sometimes by encouraging them in what we can see good about them. We often hear people say, I just can't endure such a person in the church; I have no patience with them. Then we need to pray more, and to cultivate ourselves along such lines. If we haven't any patience, we should begin at once to try to exercise patience. God has always been long-suffering and patient with his children.—Christian Guide.

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