

BEYOND TO-DAY.

BY C. LOUISE BELL.

If we could see beyond to-day
As God can see;
If all the clouds should roll away,
The shadows flee;
O'er present griefs we would not
fret,
Each sorrow we would soon forget,
For many joys are waiting yet
For you and me.

If we could know beyond to-day
As God doth know,
Why dearest treasures pass away
And tears must flow—
And why the darkness leads to
light,
Why dreary paths will soon grow
bright!
Some day life's wrongs will be made
right,
Faith tells us so.

If we could see, if we could know,
We often say!
But God in love a veil doth throw
Across our way;
We cannot see what lies before,
And so we cling to his the more,
He leads us till this life is o'er,
Trust and obey.

—Baptist Commonwealth.

INDIVIDUAL EVANGELISM.

Much has been said of the importance of individual work with individuals in the effort to win souls to Christ. Illustrations of the effectiveness of this mode of evangelism have been made prominent; and similar work has been urged as desirable on the part of all who would serve Christ and help their fellows. While all who are of a right spirit and are well informed are ready to see and to say that there has been much done in this line by certain workers, and that for this all should be grateful, some who are entitled to consideration are asking, Is this kind of individual evangelism safe for all? Is it prudent or desirable for every individual Christian to attempt to win souls by personal effort. Is there no danger in counseling every Christian believer to become an evangelist, and, in a sense, a preacher, a teacher, and a pastor, of an immortal soul? Such questions are worthy of serious consideration by those who have influence over others.

It must be admitted that not every man is fitted by nature to be a pulpit preacher, and that many who have been trained and approved by choice theological seminaries are far from being a success in the sphere for which they have spent years under instruction. Can individual Christian believers generally be expected to do better in personal evangelism without training than many theological students do with the advantages of training? Indeed, is it not obvious that sad mistakes are made by those who undertake to evangelize as individuals when they are not fitted for it by either nature or training?

Of one thing we may be confident. There are two essential qualifications for effective evangelism, either individual or collective, and those two qualifications are strong love for Christ, and strong love for those whom Christ loves. Controlled by those motives, and guided by ordinary good sense, no man can be wholly

a failure in his proper sphere, while seeking to show his personal interest in another,—and this whether the man has had or has had not, a full course in the best theological seminary or divinity school on earth.

Few realize the attractive power of an earnest, loving heart, as shown in the simple testimony of an untrained believer telling, in a natural way, of the love which entirely possesses him. It commonly does more than the carefully wrought out and finished sentences of the educated and best furnished preacher. This truth was impressed on the mind of the writer by a fact related to him by a friend years ago. One whom that friend longed to lead to the Saviour came to his home to pass the night with him. It was the evening of the mid-week prayer-meeting in his church. As the hour approached, he said to his visitor: "It is our prayer-meeting evening. I usually go, but, if you don't care to go, I'll sit here with you this evening."

"Oh! don't stay at home on my account. You go, and I'll go with you."

So the two went to the prayer-meeting together. The host hoped that they would have some good speaking that evening, for he wanted his visitor to be impressed. But the speaking was commonplace, more than ordinarily so. In one of the long pauses a plain man rose, and said simply:

"I wish I could say something that would help you all, but I can't. But I will say that I love Jesus with all my heart, and I wish he was the comfort to each of you that he is to me."

As they walked home, the host regretted that the meeting was such a failure, and he said apologetically to his guest that they usually had better speaking than that. To his surprise, his guest said:

"That man who told of the comfort he had in Jesus—he took hold of me. I can't get away from that."

And that guest returned to his host's home an anxious soul, ready to be led to the Saviour, because of the plain man who had helped to make the prayer-meeting a failure. Who shall tell us which are the most effective speakers for Christ?

One who, a generation ago, was one of the most prominent pastors in Boston, known and honored all over the country, gave similar testimony out of his church. A plain country preacher, a friend of former days, came to visit him in Boston. The city pastor would not have ventured to take him before the Sunday congregation, but he invited him to speak from the desk in his mid-week prayer-meeting. The man from the country used plain, homely phrases. In speaking of service for the Master, he said: "Some of you are doing work of one kind or another every day. Have you done a job for Jesus this week?" The cultivated pastor afterwards said that he wished his visitor had used a little choicer language before a select Boston audience.

The next week, when an invitation was extended to those who were ready to confess Christ to come to the pastor's home, there presented himself one of the most prominent and influential members of the congregation. The pastor welcomed

him, and said he was glad to have him take this step. Then he asked him if any special sermon had led him to it. To his surprise, the man responded:

"No, it wasn't any sermon; but when that man from the country asked if I'd done a job for Jesus that week, it took hold of me, and I've been thinking it over ever since. It's time I undertook a job for Jesus." The caller was then a wealthy contractor, but he had begun life as a carpenter doing odd jobs.

"I'd written and preached more than one sermon especially to reach that man," said the pastor, "and now the phrase that jarred on me had won his soul. I then made up my mind that never again would I tell the Holy Spirit what was the best instrument for him to choose for his work."

God can be trusted to lead those who want to be led. His work will not be seriously harmed by those whom he guides. Cautions and fears about the general attempting of such work as individual evangelism delight the devil, even when they are uttered by the wisest and best of men. The devil sets himself at once to convince the men who could do most through such endeavors that they are very ones now warned against.

If any one who loves Christ and who loves souls is brought of God face to face with a soul, under circumstances which justify him in speaking of the one truth dearest to him, it is that one's privilege and duty to press that truth on that soul. This duty does not depend on whether God is to give or is to withhold his blessing on the special effort. God alone has the right to forbid or even to caution such a lover for Christ and of souls in such an effort. No such qualification or training for this service is required as is necessary when a man is to be a professional pulpit preacher, or is to be a salaried helper in Christ's service. Of this truth we can be sure.

Among the many hindrances to the progress of Christ's cause in this world, an over-readiness to tell of Christ's love, and to urge sinners to test it, is not to be enumerated, even though not every single utterance wins a needy soul to the waiting Saviour. It is the devil and not the Lord, who rejoices when the danger of individual evangelism is emphasized in Christian circles.—S. S. Times.

HEAVINESS.

Some Christians have met with a strange experience which has given them no little trouble. They had hoped that if ever they should be overtaken by affliction they would be so wonderfully supported by their religion that they could "rejoice and be exceeding glad." They had expected to "glory in tribulations also." But to their surprise they have not found it so. Instead of finding ecstasy in affliction they have found depression. Their spirits have sunk like lead. They have been covered with clouds. In their distress they have concluded that they have no religion, or that that religion is vain.

St. Peter refers to this experience in these words: "Though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

Grace does not always produce ecstasy. It is sometimes accompanied with depression of spirit. The best men in the world may have this experience. It is written of the Son of God that when he entered the shadows of his passion he "began to be very heavy." Surely he was tempted in all points like as we are. He travelled the whole length of the gloomy road. Then why should we think it strange if we also are depressed in spirit in time of affliction? This experience may be inexplicable. But the bright side of it is that there is joy in sorrow when grace is in the heart. Read again the words of St. Peter in relation to the whole sentence: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice; though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations."

What a singular expression! "Ye greatly rejoice" and "Ye are in heaviness," at the same time. Does it seem strange? But it is even so. The heaviness will pass away, but the joy will remain. On the surface of the ocean there may be a current flowing toward the south, and in the same ocean at the same time, far down below the surface, there may be another current flowing toward the north. The two currents flowing in opposite directions at the same time in the same sea. And in the same heart there may be two currents of feeling flowing in opposite directions. The one seems to bear the soul down into darkness, while the other bears it upward into the light. The one is on the surface, the other is in the depths of the soil. The one is caused by changes in worldly conditions and will soon pass away. The other is caused by the love of God and shall abide forever.—N. Y. Advocate.

THE PERIL OF LITTLE SINS.

It does not take a rifle-ball to destroy a life. Men have died of pin-wounds. Some shepherds once saw an eagle soar out from a crag. It flew majestically far up into the sky, but by and by became unsteady in its motions, and began to waver in its flight. At length one wing drooped, and then the other, and the poor bird struggled vainly for a moment, and then fell swiftly to the ground. The shepherds sought the fallen bird and found that a little serpent had fastened itself upon it while it rested on the crag. The eagle did not know that the serpent was there. But the reptile gnawed in through the feathers, and while the proud monarch was sweeping through the air, the serpent's fangs were thrust into its flesh, and the eagle came reeling down into the dust.

This illustrates the story of many a human life. For a time the promise is great; then suddenly it struggles and falls. Some secret sin has long been eating its way to the heart, and at last the proud life lies soiled and dishonored in the dust. We need to be ever on the watch against these treacherous and insidious perils, these little, secret sins, which, unperceived, work death in the soul.

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