

The Christian Life.

MY SHIELD.

I must go forth and take my part
In cloudy day or darksome night;
Let me not fail Thee, nor lose heart,
However fierce the fight.
Lord, be thou, lest I faint or yield,
My Shield.

Let me not be of foes afraid,
Nor lose my courage in the stress;
The weakest need not be dismayed,
Whom thou wilt bless.
I rest me ever on Thy Word,
My Lord.

Unless Thou send, let me not go,
Nor follow other lights than Thine;
I see Heaven's path from vales below,
When Thy lamps shine,
Or, through the dark to Thee I sing,
My King.

Stand Thou between me and my fear,
O mighty Saviour, tender Friend!
No harm can hurt if Thou art near;
Stand by me till the end.
With Thee I find a peace in strife,
My life.

I gladly go and take my part,
If Thou should bid me rest, or fight;
Strengthened by faith and strong of
heart,
I struggle to the light,
Be Thou to me on every field
My Shield.
—Marianne Farningham.

SOME SATISFYING REASONS.

When you ask me what makes me believe that for me and for those whose lives are one with mine there is conscious life beyond the grave, I must answer that the reasons are manifold. It is, of course, a glorious hope, a confidence, a strong expectation; it can be nothing more. I have had no personal revelation about it, and should not know how to verify such a revelation if it were vouchsafed me. There is no demonstration of which I know anything.

With respect to the existence and the friendship of God, I believe that I may have something more than faith—experimental knowledge. When, through years of service, I have tested his fidelity; when I have habitually sought from his wisdom, comfort, courage, patience, strength, and have found what I sought, I may naturally feel that my faith in him amounts to knowledge—“I know of whom I have believed.” But this assurance of future life cannot thus enter into my consciousness. I cannot experience it until I enter into it. It is confidence: it cannot be cognition.

My faith in the future is strengthened by the knowledge that it is not a solitary faith; that the most of my fellow-men share it with me. It seems to be part of that natural righteousness which belongs to humanity. And John Fiske's contention abides with me, that nature—if you choose to say nature—could not have developed such an organ of faith as this unless there had been a reality corresponding to it; any more than she could have developed an eye where there was no light, or an ear where there were no waves of sound. I cannot help feeling that all the larger interpretations of evolution make the future life probable.

More and more, however, I find my-

self resting on the sure word of Jesus the Christ. It seems to me that he is an authority in the realm of the Spirit. Wherever I can verify his word I find it true; his insight never fails; I have never found the slightest reasons for believing him to be mistaken in any clear pronouncement about spiritual things. And when he speaks with the utmost positiveness of the certainty of the life to come, I take his word with no misgiving.

Moreover, the assurance of the life to come seems to be a part of that faith in God's Fatherhood, which I have learned from Jesus Christ and which has become the very breath of life to me. I cannot understand how the existence of such a personal relation between myself and my Father in heaven as Jesus has taught me to cherish, can be consistent with the extinction of my being at death.

Stronger than all else, however, is the assurance that comes to me through living, in this world, the immortal life. There is a kind of life, which Jesus shows me, and of which the Spirit tells me, that ought to be immortal. “The glory of going on” belongs to it. If it did not continue, something would be wrong with the universe. When I live, as best I can, this kind of life, making the Spirit who was in Jesus my companion and counsellor, my hold upon the future seems constantly to strengthen. Then I can understand what Paul meant when he said: “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—By Washington Gladden, D. D.

THE SIMPLE FAITH.

It is worth while, at times, to get back to the simplest statement of our faith, because one thing and another gets added to it until it seems a very complicated and confusing thing. It is not a great wonder that there is much perplexity of mind and vagueness of view concerning the Christian life, when there is so much difference of opinion published and scattered broadcast. But it is unavoidable that views should differ. All cannot think alike. There is reasonable difference of opinion on every great subject. There are different theories of medicine, of education, of government, as well as of religion. It is natural. No evil need result from it. Good may be wrought out of it.

But good does not come out of it, only evil, when we emphasize unduly that wherein men differ. It is thought making incidental differences essential to Christian life that harm has come from denominational divisions in the Christian church. The exaltation of secondary things, on which peculiar views are held, to primary importance has obscured the really essential element of faith. Religion has often been buried beneath a confusion of ceremonies, forms and favorite doctrines until its true likeness is lost sight of. No doubt this has caused some unbelief and much perplexity.

Now there is one way in which everyone anxious to know the truth may approach it, and all Christians of whatever name may and ought to help every

troubled soul, namely, to emphasize and magnify the things wherein all agree. For behind all differences of form, and creed, and institution stands the eternal truth in its splendid power and its simple beauty. And there is more probability of finding that by attention to that which is common to all than that to which is peculiar to any. The essence of Christianity is apt to be in every creed. One's error is not in that he holds sincerely an opinion that differs from others, but in denying sincerity to those who differ from him, and in disallowing the presence of truth in their opinions, for there is a possibility that no one person has come to a full knowledge of all the truth, and that some which has escaped him may have entered into another creed.

Aiming at the simple statement of faith for a moment sweeping aside all forms, institutions, ceremonies, theologues, the chief thing is to come into trustful, loving personal relation with Christ himself. What makes one a Christian? To be baptized one way or another, to commune, to attend church, to learn and assent to a creed—none of these things, nor all of them together make anyone a Christian, although a Christian will do all these things because he is one. But one is a Christian when he gives himself to Christ to be taught by him, and ruled by him, and saved by him alone. Christ becomes the supreme factor in that man's life. He has other teachers as he advances in years, but one voice is always of paramount authority in all matters moral and spiritual—that of Christ. Other influences come into this life, but his influence is controlling. He has other friends, but one supreme love determines all his conduct of friendship. He has many duties, but all are discharged under the incentive of supreme devotion to One who is above all other masters. The Christian life can be summed up in a personal relation of faith and love to Christ. It is like a great friendship between the disciple and his Lord.

Christ made nothing else essential but this. He sought to fill everybody's vision with himself alone. When a young man was putting his riches between his heart and Christ, Jesus told him to give them all away and follow him. When the Jews were putting even their Bible between themselves and him, he said, “Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life, and ye will not come to me that ye may have life.” In every way he set to work to clear the way and make straight the path between a man and himself. He swept aside with unsparing hand everything that hindered true devotion to him, things as worldly as sin and gold, and as sacred as the scriptures and the temple, all must be taken out of the way, if devotion to them weakened devotion to him. In all his ministry there was simply his divine call, “Follow me,” and the rising of the disciple to obey. There was simply a change of heart and a giving of trust and obedience to this Divine Saviour. Men followed him as one who told them of their God and their duty. After his departure from the earth, they thought of heaven chiefly as the place where they would be with him again. They followed him while he walked the earth, and after he had entered into his glory, they still followed him in purity of life, turning from the sin they had loved to the good he loved, in obedience to God, doing only the will of the Heavenly Father, and in service to man, going everywhere to lift the burdens that op-

pressed mankind. That was the Christian life to the first disciples. Why should it be anything else to any man?
—Chris. Intelligencer.

TWO FOES OF HAPPINESS.

Discontent is one enemy of happiness. Discontent is thirst. Men thirst for physical gratification, for social enjoyment and position, for worldly possessions, and for intellectual improvement. They feel their lack, their emptiness, and feel it most keenly. If they should possess all these things they would not be satisfied. The soul of a man has a place for God, and so long as he is kept out of that place the soul is empty and barren. It is only when God fills the thoughts, the affections, the will, the conscience, and the aspirations that true contentment is found.

Fear is another foe to happiness. No soul can be happy so long as it is racked with fear. Fear of want, fear of evil report, fear of what men may think or say or do, fear of loss, fear of sickness or death, and many other fears keep men and women on the rack all the days of their lives. Many schemes have been resorted to for the purpose of overcoming fear, and some have succeeded. But fear may be overcome in such a way as to leave the soul quite as desolate as it was before. One may overcome the pain of fear without touching the cause of fear. Why are we so fearful? Is it not because we have given to God such a mean and narrow place in our hearts? Perfect love casteth out fear, and God is love. Lift up your hearts, O ye gates, and let the King of glory come in, and fear shall fly away.

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