

Our Contributors.

THE BURNING BUSH.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

How sacred the most common things become when God is in them! How ennobled is the humblest when employed for His glory! A lonely shepherd in ancient Midian goes out to watch his flock. Before him is a prickly thorn-bush, just like a thousand other wild acacias of that desert region. Suddenly the bush begins to blaze with a supernatural light that kindles every leaf and twig; the bush is burning, yet it is not consumed! Out of the fiery splendor goes a voice: "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham." And the shepherd put off his shoes from his feet and hid his face, for he feared to look toward the glory of the Lord.

Here was an ordinary bush that might have been used by Moses to cook his evening meal. But God made it the place out of which spoke the majestic voice that "rolls the stars along!" The man who stood beside it is a simple shepherd, he is soon to become the most extraordinary of law-givers; the staff which he carries in his hand is about to be used in the working of mighty miracles.

So are the humblest things ennobled when God uses them for Himself. The stones and timber of yonder church might have built a warehouse or a factory. They were fashioned into a sacred sanctuary, within whose walls many hundreds of Christ's followers assembled last Sabbath to commemorate His redeeming love. Beside me on this study-table lies a volume made from linen rags and printer's ink; the volume itself is the inspired word of God. Within it resides that infinite light which proceeded from heaven; it is the burning bush that has illuminated the human race throughout the centuries; yet it is not consumed. I write these lines for the columns of a newspaper; and until a comparatively recent time a newspaper was not the vehicle of sacred truth, or spiritual influence. But in these days the Lord makes known to millions a multitude of truths pertaining to his kingdom through the evanescent sheets that issue from the press room. Thousands of souls are converted; tens of thousands are comforted, strengthened, and directed in Christian enterprises by these couriers of the Cross. Every man who holds a pen or a type for Jesus Christ holds a Moses rod. God dwells by His Spirit in a sanctified press, as in a flaming bush.

In all the history of His kingdom the Lord has chosen the weak things and the humblest to confound the mighty. He lighted up the shepherd Moses, and David, the farmer's son, and Amos, the herdsman, and Peter, the fisherman, and Paul, the tent-maker; and has not the world "turned aside to see" the marvelous illumination? They were no more self-luminous than that acacia-bush in the Arabian desert; the inspiration of the Divine Spirit was but the kindling of a flame that shall never die out.

"Ah," whispers some follower of

Christ, "I cannot be a prophet, or an apostle, or a reformer, or a hero such as the Luthers, the Bunyans, the Wesleys, and the Chalmers and Finneys have been." Very true. You may be lowlier than any thorn-bush in the desert; but He who made Horeb's shrub to be bright by His presence, can shine in you and through you to others. He can ennoble and consecrate your humble life by His indwelling grace. What every Christian needs to feel is that if the love of Jesus has kindled his or her soul, there he or she ought to shine. Because you are not called of God my friend, to a theological chair or pulpit, must you not preach anywhere? You can witness for Jesus wherever you find an ear to listen to your message. You can speak for Him in the prayer-gathering, in the Sunday school, in the sick room, in the dwellings of the poor, and in your own family circle. Let such live Christians as Ralph Wells and John R. Mott and Miss Grace Dodge and many a city missionary and Salvation Army slum-worker testify how the bush can shine even though it be not fed from the coal-burn of a theological seminary.

Next to the gift of the Holy Spirit the crying want of these days is the fuller development of the "rank and file" of Christ's blood redeemed hosts. This world is not to be saved by the geniuses but by the common folk who are inspired by an uncommon zeal for the Master's work. If you cannot be a calcium light or a great electric burner, you can be a candle and shed a clear halo of spiritual radiance around the humblest occupation. A kitchen may become as sacred as a temple if the Holy Spirit dwells there in a devout heart.

A servant, with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that, and the action fine.

Oh thou blood-redeemed sinner, what did Jesus Christ turn thee into a Christian for, except to let thy light shine? Whether thou hast five talents or only half a talent, let thy thorn-bush glow with a simple desire to glorify thy Father which is in heaven.

THE PRIEST AND THE MAN.

It is said that the clerical office at the present time does not command the respect it once did. In times past the pastor of a church was the dominie of the parish; that is, he was its master. He was the parson, that is the person of the community. He held this position for the most part by virtue of his superior acquirements. If not the only educated man in the congregation he was the best educated. In addition, moreover, there was thrown about him as an occupant of the clerical office a glamor which centuries of ecclesiastical claims had given. Of course in these regards the position has changed. To a very large extent the glamor has vanished. In very many cases, likewise, there are men in the pew, who, as to general information, are the superiors of the men in the pulpit. Because of the fact, too, that knowledge is so specialized at the present time, this must be the case to an extent which it is impossible for pastor and preacher

to overcome. And yet probably there is not the difference between his position now and what it was as sometimes men think. The pastor of a church is still looked up to with respect and honor, and the minister in any presence has a position perhaps accorded instinctively to no one else.

At the same time it is now the man rather than the minister who commands continued respect and esteem. If the man is not behind the minister to back up and support, as it were, the office, honor will soon depart from it. The man must have sufficient accord with the various topics, ethical and religious, that are proclaimed that the man behind the minister may stand out clear and distinct. If this obtains there will be nowhere any lack of respect. In a recent picture of French life we came across this sentence the other day: "Those who did not respect the priest, honored the man." Everyone appreciates the point made. Even where the office may be somewhat discredited, the man stands out supreme. We may be sure, therefore, that there will be no failure anywhere in securing adequate honor and respect for the ministerial office if only it is a man in the broadest sense of the term who occupies it.—*Baptist Commonwealth.*

COSTLY BUILDING.—The railroad just completed up the Congo has cost \$12,000,000 and 4,000 lives. More than twenty human lives have been laid down upon every mile of that wonderful road into the heart of the Dark Continent. On that one enterprise alone more lives were sacrificed than all the lives sacrificed in foreign missions from the days of the apostles to the present time. They did it for earthly riches that fade away from us and we from them, but our sacrifices are for Christ, from whom no power in the universe can separate us. They have done this to obtain the commerce, the gold, and the diamonds of that country of inexhaustible resources. But we have a world from which the rich treasure of redeemed men and women can be gathered for the enrichment of the kingdom of God. How long shall we wait to see a sacrifice on the part of the church, comparable to the blessing to be obtained in its making?—*Ex.*

MINISTERS IN DEBT.—Says the *Journal and Messengers* "A writer in one of our exchanges descants upon the ill-repute into which ministers are brought when they do not pay their debts, and he thinks that the fault is often with the churches which do not meet their obligations to their pastors. No doubt there is propriety in such a defense of the ministry where it is true that the church is at fault, as it so frequently is. Perhaps the laxity of churches has had much to do with the growth of bad habits on the part of some ministers. When a pastor is obliged to run into debt for the necessities of life, when the church is neglecting to pay, the amount stipulated as salary, and at the time specified, it is helping to beget loose habits on the part of the pastor, furnishing him an excuse which he ought not to have for not paying those whom he may owe. It is not true that a church may be delinquent in the matter of providing for its pastor and not lose caste. Its delinquencies soon become known, and such a church loses standing among the churches, and especially among the ministers. It ought to be shunned by every self-respecting minister."

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