

Our Contributors.

LOVABLE CHRISTIANS.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

There is no line of eulogy in the Bible that is more to be coveted than this single line, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The original possessor of this precious encomium was John the evangelist, and the inspired writer of five wondrous books of Holy Scripture. There is a very false conception of him in many minds, as if he were a mild, effeminate person, lacking in all the robust qualities of an athletic manhood. On the contrary, he was peculiarly bold and energetic and outspoken—one of two "sons of thunder." He was a man of flaming zeal for his Master's glory, and of red-hot hatred for everything false and wicked. And yet he was the author of those three marvellous love letters which have the effusive sweetness of the pressed honeycomb. There seems to have been a peculiar inner sympathy between Jesus Christ and this favorite disciple; he penetrated more fully into his Master's mission, understood more deeply his Master's character, and partook more of his Master's spirit than any other of the twelve. He was the planet that rode nearest to the sun. That "leaning on the breast of Jesus" at the paschal supper had a meaning in it; it meant that John's heart drew so strongly to Christ's heart that their outward embrace was as natural as the kiss of a husband and a wife.

John might have sat for that portrait which Paul afterwards painted when he described the Christian character as possessing "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest," and then adds, as a finishing touch, "whatsoever things are lovely and are of good report." This word "lovely" does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It signifies what is dear to anyone, and the phrase "things of good report" signifies that which wins admiration and approval. We might paraphrase the expression, and render it—"be lovable; so live as to win converts to your Master." Every Christian is or ought to be a representative of Jesus Christ before the world. He has been well styled "the world's Bible"—and is about the only Bible that thousands ever look at. It should be the aim of every follower of Christ to be a living epistle, not only legible but attractive to all who study him. Is this always so? Is the religion of every good man and good woman truly lovable? We fear not. Some men's piety has quite too much of the flavor of the "old Adam" still lingering about it. Others sour their religion with the acidity of censoriousness, and their conversation sets everyone's teeth on edge. After an hour's talk with them you find yourself almost insensibly prejudiced against some of the best people of your acquaintance. A fly has been dropped by these censorious dyspeptics into every pot of fragrant ointment, and a smirch has been left by their uncharitable tongues on the fairest characters. There

is quite too much lemon and too little sugar in the composition of such people to make them agreeable to anybody. Only half converted themselves, they convert no one else.

Somewhat akin to these are a class of knotty and crabbed Christians whom everybody respects, and almost nobody loves. In my early ministry I had a most conscientious and godly-minded officer in my church, who rigidly practised whatsoever things were true and whatsoever things were just and whatsoever things were honorable. He was honest to a farthing, and devout to the very core. I never knew him to do a wrong deed, and I scarcely ever knew him to do a pleasant one. There was a deal of good, solid, and most excellent meat in him, but no one liked to prick his fingers in coming at it. The rugged old chestnut burr Christian might have been a great power in the church; but even the children in the street were afraid to speak to him; and so he went sturdily on his way to heaven, praying and working and growling as he went, reminding me constantly of his famous countryman, Thos. Carlyle. If there had been a few drops of the Epistle of St. John distilled into him, he would have made a grand specimen of a Christian, and probably he has become sweeter and mellowed by this time in the warm atmosphere of Heaven. That good man did more than make a mistake; he committed a sin by destroying a large part of his influence for winning others to Christ. As a soldier has no right to wet his powder or to blunt his sword when he goes into battle, so no Christian has a right to make his religion offensive when he might make it attractive. His personal influence is a trust and a talent which he is bound to use for his Master. "He is wise that winneth souls," and no one of us is likely to win anybody until we have won both their respect and their affections. Influence is never to be gained by compromising with other people's sins, or conniving at their wrong-doings; trimmers and time-servers are only repaid with contempt. The price of permanent love is fidelity to the right of an unselfish aim to do good to others.

A lovable Christian, therefore, is one who hits the golden mean between easy good-natured laxity on the one hand and stern and uncharitable moroseness on the other. He is sound and yet sweet; he is all the sweeter for living much in the sunshine of Christ's countenance. He never incurs suspicion or contempt by compromising with sinful prejudices, nor does he repel people by doing a righteous act in a churlish or bigoted fashion. The blessed Jesus is our model here as in everything else. Was not His the sinless and ineffable majesty of holiness that awed His followers at the same time that His gentle benignity inspired their deepest loyalty and affection? If Jesus were now upon earth the most wretched outcasts would be drawn to Him, and the lowliest beggar-child would be glad to climb upon His knee and to kiss that sad, sweet

countenance of purity and love. There would be nothing in this derogatory to His dignity as the Son of God. Christ Jesus was love incarnate. By as much as He abhorred sin, He loved sinners, and sought to save the guiltiest. He never spurned the vilest from His presence. When hard-hearted Pharisees scoffed at Him for eating with publicans and sinners, His reply was that He came into the world for that very purpose—to seek and to win and to save those who were lost. Let us copy Christ. Let us learn from Him how to combine the most unbending sense of justice, purity, and loyalty to God with the lovable attractions of a sunny face, and kind words, and cordial courtesy, and unselfish sympathy with the most sinful as well as the most suffering.

Who are the best loved people in the community? I answer unhesitatingly they are the unselfish. They are those who have drunk deepest of the spirit of Jesus Christ. They are those who have the most effectually cut that cursed cancer of self out of their hearts, and filled its place with love that "seeketh not its own." This beautiful grace sometimes blooms out in the most unexpected places. It was illustrated by the poor lad in the coal mine when a fatal accident occurred, and a man came down to relieve the sufferers, and the brave boy said to him, "Don't mind me; Joe Brown is a little lower down, and he's a most gone; save him first!" There are enough "Joe Browns" who are lower down in poverty and ignorance, in weakness and in want than we are, and Christianity's first duty is to save them. It was to save sinners from sinking into the sleeper pit of hell that Jesus died on Calvary. He who stoops the lowest to rescue lost souls will have the highest place in heaven. Will it not be those unselfish spirits who will have John's place up there on the Saviour's bosom and will be "the disciple whom Jesus loves?"

WHAT HIS LETTER SAID.—It is told that a Jewish surgeon, with the Russian army in Manchuria, writing to his mother at Warsaw, after saying in the body of his letter that admirable order prevails among the troops, that supplies are abundant, and that illness is so rare that the medical corps has little to do, concluded with a request that there be sent him certain Hebrew books of which he gave the Hebrew titles. A translation of this list shows that he asked for: "Famine and Destitution," "Consequent Fearful Epidemics," "Scarcely Any Sanitary Appliances," "Demoralization of the Army Constantly Increased," "End of Discipline," "Wish I Were Taken Prisoner."

DR. MEYER'S ADVICE.—The Rev. F. B. Meyer, in a recent address to ministers, stated that it was one of the mistakes of his life that he had not remembered the Sabbath day to keep it holy; by which he meant, he added, that he had lived "full-pelt," not setting apart, as he should, a day for "lazing about," throwing stones into the sea, or cultivating a garden such as London affords. The result was that at fifty-seven he was threatened with failing eyesight, and his body lacked the strength and buoyancy which were needed to make it an effective channel for conveying to others the accumulated experience of previous years. His advice to ministers was to give more time to their homes, to their wives and families, and to get color into their cheeks.

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