

BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

If you've a gray-haired mother  
In the old home far away—  
Sit down and write the letter  
You put off day by day.  
Don't wait until her tired steps  
Reach heaven's pearly gate—  
But show her that you think of her  
Before it is too late.

If you've a tender message  
Or a loving word to say,  
Don't wait till you forget it,  
But whisper it today.  
Who knows what bitter memories  
May haunt you if you wait—  
So make your loved ones happy  
Before it is too late.

We live but in the present,  
The future is unknown—  
To-morrow is a mystery,  
Today is all our own:  
The chance that fortune lends to us  
May vanish while we wait,  
So spend your life's rich treasure  
Before it is too late.

The tender words unspoken,  
The letters never sent,  
The long-forgotten messages,  
The wealth of love unspent.  
For these some hearts are breaking,  
For these some loved ones wait—  
So show them that you care for them,  
Before it is too late.

Christian Messenger.

HIGHER GROUND.

CONCLUDED.

In closing these papers on "Higher Ground" the thought that comes strongly to me is the "shall" of the Lord in the text, "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall men give into your bosom." This positive and inspiring promise, while it may be used in a general sense, is, I believe, clearly intended by the Saviour to be specifically applied to the matter of giving for His cause beyond what might seem prudent. The first step of faith in this direction being honored another is taken, and yet others, God always honoring genuine faith. Having taken a step of faith along this line and being encouraged to carefully press on, the Lord has very definitely burdened me to write these papers to encourage others to go beyond the giving of the "tenth." Taking the "tenth" (tithe) as the standard of Christian giving, those who have the desire to make free-will offering may with God's help, (and he always helps in such cases) find means at hand to bring about the hoped for results, and while generally speaking we need no revelation, yet God honors our faith by bringing to notice many opportunities which before were unheeded.

The following methods have been called from varied sources and will, no doubt, suggest opening to those who long for the extension of His kingdom. The results obtained from the berry, small fruit, or vegetable patch, the acre or part acre of grain, the careful extension of one's business, the selling of tracts, Scripture cards, good books and periodicals, the collecting of postage stamps, and numerous other ways suitable to different surroundings and circumstances, have been especially blessed of God when undertaken for His glory. If the bestowing of gifts to our earthly friends brings to us such feelings of warmth and expansion of heart, how much more will we be blessed if we ask larger things from Him that we may give them back again for the extension of His kingdom. In these days of fanaticism and falling away it will be well for us while carefully avoiding presumption, to as carefully avoid pessimism and be as wise in our day and generation as the children of the world. Beloved, the world is moving very quickly, great events are transpiring, "let us who are of the day" be sober putting on the breast-plate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation. We are soldiers indeed and our victorious battling will last as long as we live. Let us study the plans of our captain and go forth in the strength He gives conquering and to conquer. There is much to be done, let us endure hardness as good soldiers steadfastly laboring that the Gospel be quickly preached in the regions beyond and the church will be the mother of many children, the caretaker of those upon she brings forth and those who come to her.

C. K. S.

"A MIDLIN' MAN O' GOD."

In a recent popular novel one of the characters is made to say: "But I'll tell you this: a middlin' doctor is a pore thing, and a middlin' lawyer is a pore thing, but keep me from a middlin' man o' God."

Certainly a quaint and striking way of saying what the average layman feels and thinks concerning ministerial mediocrity. There is a dreary monotony of mediocre ministers, that is one cause of the poor progress we make in many places. True, we cannot all be men of extraordinary talent, but most of the mediocrity in the pulpit is due to other causes than want of talent.

Sometimes it is due to indifference. There are ministers who do not care to excel in their calling. They only care to drag their slow length along and "get a living out of it." There is no zeal, no ambition, no courage, no progressiveness, simply indifference to the requirements of their high calling.

Sometimes it is due to downright indolence. There are men who are intellectually lazy. They cannot get up enough mental stimulus or momentum to carry them through a good book. All reading is dry to them. Others are physically lazy, too lazy to stir about among their own people, visit the families and look after things generally. This makes a "middlin' man o' God," and that is saying little enough.

Sometimes mediocrity is due to inadequate stands. There are preachers, as well as people, who do not know what good preaching is. Their ideals are low. Their aims are correspondingly low, and they are too easily satisfied. They never rise. They never preach or do anything above mediocrity.

Sometimes it is due to want of literary culture and mental training. Immature men are sometimes admitted into the ministry. They have no mental furnishings, no stock of material, no food for thought.

Sometimes it is due to lack of religious experience. The only thing that will ever bring a man up to his best in the ministry, is a deep, rich Christian experience, and the possession of the fulness of the blessing of the gospel. No wonder some men cannot preach. They know too little of the grace of God by personal experience. They hover between life and death. They are not going on to perfection. They are not bad, they are just "middlin'". They will never join the band of men that turn the world upside down, until they get out of that class. The experience of entire sanctification would save many a man from a ministry of mediocrity.

The people do not want mediocrity. If they need a lawyer, they want a good lawyer. If they need a doctor, they want a good doctor. Mediocrity will not do when fortune and life are at stake. They will not trust the "middlin'" men in other professions, neither will they tolerate "the middlin' man o' God." Brethren, if you knew and realized how the people feel about this matter, many of you would bestir yourselves. This is intended for you. Struggle, brethren, struggle upward. There is always room at the top, the farther up beyond the jostling throng the more room. Get out of the crowded stratum of mediocrity. Aspire to the highest possible efficiency. For your own sake, for souls' sake, for the work's sake, and for the Saviour's sake, climb!—Evangelical Messenger.

SOUL-TRAVAIL.

The overheard closet supplication of Geo. Whitefield was, "Give me souls or take my soul!"

Alone, it is said, was infinitely and insatiably greedy for the conversion of souls; and to this end he poured out his very heart in prayer and preaching.

Matthew Henry said: "I would think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to Christ than mountains of silver and gold to myself."

Doddridge said: "I long for the conversion of souls more sensibly than for anything besides."

The death-bed testimony of the sainted Brown was, "Now, after nearly forty years preaching Christ, I think I would rather beg my bread all the laboring days of the week for an opportunity of publishing the Gospel on the Sabbath, than, without such a privilege, to enjoy the richest possessions on earth."

John Welsh, often in the coldest win-

ter nights visiting for prayer, was found weeping on the ground, and wrestling with the Lord on account of his people. When pressed for an explanation of his distress, he said, "I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, while I know not how it is with them."

Ralph Waller wrote, "My greatest desire is for the salvation of sinners. Oh for souls! souls! the salvation of souls! Oh, could I always live for eternity, preach for eternity, pray for eternity and speak for eternity! I want to lose sight of men and see God only." Two days before his death, he said: "At Liverpool and Boston I appropriated one hour each day to pray for souls, and frequently spent the time prostrate on my study floor; in addition to which, at Boston I held night vigils, arising to pray each night at twelve o'clock, I do not say it to boast, but it appears plain to me that the secret of success in the conversion of souls is prayer.

Brainerd could say of himself: "I cared not where I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls for Christ. All my desire was for the conversion of the heathen, and all my hope was in God."

It is said of Wm. McDermott that he used to spend whole nights in prayer with John Smith before those seasons of revival, in which multitudes of sinners were won to Christ. It was said of John Smith, that when he came down stairs in the mornings, his eyes were well-nigh swollen up with weeping.—Sel.

WATCHING FOR FAULTS.

"When I was a boy," said an old man, "I was often very idle, and used to play during the lessons with other boys as idle as myself. One day we were fairly caught by the master. 'Boys,' he said, 'you must not be idle: you attend closely to your books. The first one of you who sees another boy idle will please come and tell me.'"

"Ah!" I thought to myself, "there is Joe Simmons, whom I don't like: I'll watch him, and if I see him look off his book I'll tell the teacher."

"It was not long until I saw Joe look off his book, and I went up at once to tell the master."

"Indeed," said he, "how did you know he was idle?"

"I saw him," said I.

"You did? And were your eyes on your book when you saw him?"

"I was caught, and the other boys laughed, and I never watched for idle boys again."

If we watch over our conduct and try to keep it right, and always do our duty, we will not have time to watch for faults or idleness in others. This will keep us out of mischief and make us helpful to others.—Our Young Folks.

AN OUTRAGEOUS DEFENSE.

Again and again it is stated that prohibition does not prohibit, that it is impossible to stop the traffic, that men will have liquor and men will sell it—which is simply another way of stating that the men engaged in the liquor business care not for law, defy authority, and propose to set at naught the government which protects them, and to which they, as good citizens, are bound to submit.

No other class of law-breakers, so far as we are aware, take this position. The thief does not publish a paper to show that it is impossible to execute the laws against stealing; he does not insist that he shall be licensed to steal because if he is not licensed he will steal anyway. No editors take it upon them to say that it is impossible to enforce the laws prohibiting murder, and therefore it is better to regulate and control crimes which cannot be suppressed. Nor do we find any newspaper organ advocating the licensing of horse thieves on the ground that it is impossible to prevent horse stealing, and therefore it is better to have the money that the licensing will bring, and have the practice regulated, than it is to have horse-stealing go on without any restraint whatever.

These illustrations simply show the absurdity of the rum-sellers' plea. The man who stands up and says you cannot execute a constitutional law, thereby proclaims himself a defiant law-breaker; and the men who urge and echo these pleas show that they themselves are disposed to abet crime and encourage criminals.—The Christian.

THE KEY IS IN THE POCKET.

Did you ever hear a man remind the Lord of his promise in Malachi 3:10? I have, many a time. I have heard men really yell to the Lord to "open those windows of heaven, and pour out the blessing." It would seem as though they would break the glass out of those windows, or have the Lord tear the frame to pieces, they were so anxious for the blessing; but the windows didn't open, the blessings didn't come, and they felt a little hard toward the Lord for the failure. But all the time they had the key in their pockets, and didn't use it.

How does that passage read? Look sharp: "Bring ye all the tithes (tenth of your income) into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith (that is, with the tenth), said the Lord, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."—The "tenth" is the key to the windows. Apply the key. Bring that tenth into the storehouse. Take it out of your pocket, and give it to the Lord. Then what will happen? Why, he says he will open the windows and pour out the blessing. You can't keep the key in your pocket and get the blessing. How much noise is wasted over this text, and it is called prayer! Fulfill the condition and God will fulfill the promise.—The Rev. J. O. Denning.

A PRAYER FOR THE TIMES.

Lord save me from all sinfulness in my own heart and life!

Save me from the false doctrines, false authorities, and bigotries of sectarianism!

Save me from the ignorance, folly, and formality of fashionable religion.

Save me from over valuing anything because it is popular!

Save me from under-valuing anything because it is not popular.

Save me from the awfulness of infidelity—from all forms of godlessness and hopelessness!

Save me from all social and political corruptions and delusions!

Help me to live and die a humble, faithful, holy, and happy Bible Christian!—Sel.

That man of God and lover of souls, James Caughey, tells in one of his books, how he was invited out to tea one evening, and though there was nothing harmful in the talk of the hour, yet when he went into the meeting that night his soul was like a loosely-strung bow. He couldn't shoot the King's arrows into the hearts of the King's enemies, for he had no power. It had been lost at the tea-table.—Sel.

When Pompey could not prevail with a city to billet his army with them, he persuaded them to take a few weak, maimed soldiers; but those soon recovered their strength, and opened the gates to the whole army. And thus it is the devil courts us only to lodge some small sin—a sin of infirmity or two—which, being admitted, soon gather strength and sinews, and so subdue us.—Price.

It would not be so bad if all the woe and sorrow came to the drinker himself, but it is the vicarious suffering it creates that makes intemperance so terrible. The husband drinks and the worthy wife is woeful, sorrowful. The father gets drunk and his innocent children go hungry, sick, suffer and die. The son goes on a debauch, and his father's pride perishes and his mother's heart breaks.

Never was faithful prayer lost at sea. No merchant trades with such certainty as the praying saint. Some prayers, indeed, have a longer voyage than others; but then they come back with the richer lading at last.—Gurnall.

Commanders are sent to sea with "sealed orders." We are sent in the same way. It makes no difference what the orders are.

Be careful that the things you are getting do not get you.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S COLUMN.

MASSACHUSETTS State Hospital.

Dear Highway.—It may be that some of your readers occasionally think of the "little girl" who, over a year ago, left her dear home in the hopes of being able to serve God more effectually as a nurse, and pointing the sick and dying to the ever loving Christ. That was my chief aim in coming here and I think I shall never forget the early purpose of my life. Perhaps you wonder whether I am still clinging to that Christ and following in His footsteps or whether I am growing cold and indifferent to my early training and great privileges in the gospel. No, I thank God that I love Him better today than ever before; and find Him an ever present help in time of need. I can truly say that my life without God would be a perfect blank; and the nearer I keep to my Saviour the happier I am. There are not idle words but truths which have burned themselves into my very soul; and I know by experience that God never intended me to live a selfish, careless life. It is impressed on me more and more each day.

I do not find it all "smooth sailing" (so to speak) here, for to the contrary I find many things to detract a person's thoughts of heavenly things, and all one needs to do is to step into the current of worldliness and be swept on—on. But so far Jesus, my blessed Saviour, has helped me to be faithful I believe, and I thank Him for it. I also feel thankful for my early Christian training and for my weekly encouragement from home.

I am going to try and attend part of our camp meetings this summer and expect to get a refreshing.

Pray for me Christian workers that I may "grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Your sister in Christ,  
JENNIE COSMAN.

PLEASANT CORNERS.

"Why, auntie," we exclaimed, as we found the dear old lady out of doors, "you are putting some of your choicest rose-bushes away out here in the back yard."

"Yes; and I'm going to put geraniums and pinks and other things which will bloom all summer, out here, too, child"—and a more tender look dimmed the twinkle in the kindly eyes while she nodded toward an upper window in the dingy wall of a tenement-house opposite.

"I know they'll be sort of out of sight from our house, but there's a woman sits sewing at that back window day after day, week in and week out, and I'm fixing this corner for her. No, I don't know her, only she's always busy and tired-looking, and maybe the flowers will put a bit of brightness into her life."

Who can tell what memories, what hopes, what lessons, the beauty of the blossoms and their fragrance bore to that poor little room through the long summer days? And how many ways there are of making pleasant corners to gladden tired eyes, if only we were not too selfishly busy to notice the eyes or plan the corners.—At Home and Abroad.

A SHORT SERMON.

In New York City a bright-eyed, bare-footed, shabby little fellow was working his way through a crowded car, offering his papers in every direction, in a way that showed him well used to the business, and of a temperament not easily daunted. The train started while he was making change, and the conductor, passing him, laughed. "Caught this time, Joe!" he said. "You'll have to run to Fourteenth Street."

"Don't care," laughed Joe, in return, "I can see all the way back again."

A white-haired old gentleman seemed interested in the boy, and questioned him concerning his way of living and his earnings. There was a younger brother to be supported, it appeared. "Jimmy" was lame, and couldn't earn much himself.

"Ah, I see. That makes it hard; you could do better alone."

The shabby little figure was erect in a moment, and the denial was prompt and somewhat indignant. No, I couldn't! Jim's somebody to go home to; he's lots of help. What would be the good of havin' luck, if there was nobody to divide with?"

"Fourteenth Street?" called the conductor, and as the newsboy plunged out into the gathering dusk, the old gentleman remarked, to nobody in particular, "I've heard many a poorer sermon than that."—Sel.