

Stories of Grace and Truth.

The following story was narrated to me by a gentleman who received it at first hand, and to whom I have submitted this manuscript for the verification of the details. What strikes one in following the thread of this incident is the remarkable way in which the Spirit of God works in harmony with the common sense of human life. The whole is so natural, and yet shows so clearly the marks of the supernatural, that one cannot but see how the human and divine are united in all that pertains to man in his relation to God. It is not difficult to grasp the truth of revelation when it has such striking commentaries as these stories of truth and grace, enacted before our eyes every day, afford us.

Here is the story: During the late Franco-German war a priest, who had been one of the Vatican Council, had been detailed by the Pope to look after the sick and wounded among the French army. He went, accordingly, with the credentials of his appointment, and reported to the general officer, who directed him to go to a certain village. Wishing for some reason to go elsewhere, in accordance with a previous plan of service, he declined to go to the village indicated by the officer, and started toward another place which he had himself determined to make the seat of his work and ministry. As he proceeded on his road he asked the way, and was directed by a peasant to go on till the road branched and to take the left hand turn, and he would be further directed by the track of a man and a hand in the snow. He mistook the direction, and returned to the village to which he had been previously asked to go by the officer, and which had in the meantime fallen into the hands of the Germans. Upon entering the outskirts of the village he was challenged by the sentry, and taken to the officer in command, who, having heard his mission, refused to give him either house or escort until later on in the day.

Having thus spent some time to turn into a small tavern, where he had heard there were a number of French prisoners, some of whom were wounded and one dying. Some of these prisoners were seated about a table in the public room, drinking, playing cards, and acting most terribly. Their blasphemy was something horrible. The priest was so shocked by it that he hardly knew whether to go further in or to retreat, but finally decided to enter. Upon making known his name and rank, he was invited to a dining man in the house, he was directed with a horrible oath to an adjoining room. Entering this room, he saw a man lying on a pallet and apparently dying. If he was shocked at what greeted his eyes in the room, he was more shocked at the greeting he received from the dying soldier, for, as if irritated by the appearance of a priest, he broke out upon him with a volley of terrible oaths. So fearful was the blasphemy from this wounded and dying man, that the priest was dumbfounded, and knew not what to do or say. However, after a moment's pause, and obeying a sudden impulse, he approached the dying man, and, without saying a word, took out his watch and glanced at it intently as if to note the time. This he stood motionless and speechless, for a full minute.

This strange performance on the part of the priest, seemed to arrest the attention and excite the curiosity of the soldier, who paused in his stream of profane abuse, and asked in rather demurred, of the priest (still with an oath) what he was doing.

"What are you standing there looking at your watch in that way for?" The priest replied, hardly knowing what he said, "I am going to see the most awful sight that any man can see. I am watching to see your soul pass into hell in five minutes."

This he said in tones of awful solemnity and without lifting his eyes, or in any leastwise changing his position. This startling remark, and the once arrested and changed the current of the dying man's thoughts.

For a moment he kept silence, and then in tones of terror stricken alarm he exclaimed: "To see my soul go into hell in five minutes! My God! what must I do?"

The priest was for a moment at a loss what to answer, but, pondering a moment he was again moved to speak—he hardly knew what or why. A passage of scripture which he had been reading that morning came vividly into his memory, and, obeying the impulse upon him, he solemnly repeated these words: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseeth from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

As these words were repeated slowly and solemnly, the dying man, apparently in an instant, grasped their import, and, with an eager inquiry, he exclaimed, "Are those words true?"

"Yes," replied the priest, and for the first time he lifted his eyes from the face of his watch to that of the dying man, and continued, "Do you believe them to be true for yourself?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, "and there came instantly over his face a wonderful change of expression—a strange look of peace—I believe them." And raising himself up from his pallet with a last effort, he pointed to the roof where his drinking and swearing comrades were, whose blasphemy was still heard, and continued with an eager whisper, "Go in there and tell that to them."

With these words gaped out from his dying lips he fell back on his pallet, dead, but his hope in the dying light instantly conveyed of sin and salvation, saved as a brand plucked from the burning; his soul passing, not into hell, but into paradise that same hour.

The priest was by this time himself in an amazement of mental and spiritual excitement. He was as much dumbfounded at himself, and at the words which he had been led to speak to the dying man, as the dying man had been. The sudden change in the manner of the dying soldier and his instant acceptance of the offered forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, astonished him; the calm look of peace which swept over and rested upon his face as he died, and his urgent commission to repeat the words to his comrades, all increased his astonishment. Without stopping at an instant longer, he rushed through the public room and out of the house; nor did he stop until he reached his own

house, returning by the way in which he came. The priest had been awakened to the fullness of the teachings of his church by what he had seen and heard while attending the Vatican Council at Rome, of which he was a member. What brought matters to a crisis now was seeing the change that came over the dying man simply upon his acceptance of the truth of the gospel without any administration of the rites of the church. Having reached his home, he at once sought the Bible, and, turning up the passages which he had been so strangely led to quote to the dying soldier, he studied them long and intently himself. Previously they had made no impression on his mind when he had read them, just the morning before; but now they were full of strange new meaning to him. He read on and searched the Scriptures, comparing one Scripture with another, until he saw God's way of salvation through simple faith in Jesus Christ; and at once submitted himself to Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness."

As a result of his careful study and his personal surrender to Christ he resolved at once to break with Rome and seek a new fellowship. So God is still calling out His own from all states and circumstances, and the Word of God is not bound. Surely we may all praise Him and say: "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."—George F. Pentecost, in Congregationalist.

BY REV. THOMAS H. CUTLER. The elder Dr. Stephen H. Tyng, then at the height of his power and popularity—was sitting at my table one day, and I asked him the question, "What is a call to the ministry?" The doctor promptly replied, "It is the capacity to preach the gospel in such a way that people will come to hear you." This apt reply showed the sagacity of the veteran pastor who was then addressing his faithful message to crowds of auditors every Sabbath. Many a godly man who is proud in scholarship and in piety has no gift in attracting immortal souls within the sound of his voice. His ministry is well nigh a failure. We can do but little good to those who do not like us, and no good at all to those who will not come to hear us. It is of the utmost importance that every ambassador of Jesus Christ should use every legitimate method to induce people to let him in; in other words, to win their hearts. Then he may hope to win those hearts to the Saviour.

Of course the mere hunger for popular approval is not such a motive as an utter degradation of the ministerial office. Such unselfish ambition is a cancer that gnaws away the vitals of every man that falls a prey to it. But there is such a thing as a legitimate and laudable desire to be popular. Every minister of God's Word should strive to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and to "let no man despise him." Soul-winning is his business; and he is not likely to win any soul to Christ whom he has not won to such a respect and confidence that he can influence that soul. We are told that the "common people heard Jesus gladly." This does not refer to the vulgar in point of caste; it signifies the multitude, the mass of people irrespective of social condition, or nation. The best scene of the world, Jesus Christ was a popular preacher. He reached the popular heart; and great multitudes thronged to listen to the marvellous Being who spake as never man spake.

It is a very curious error that fearless ministers destroy their popularity by preaching pungent and unpalatable truth. The opposite is true. Cowards are despised; and courage always commands respect. That very man, Dr. Tyng, was a most fearless denouncer of fashionable sins, and a faithful exponent of the pure gospel; and great crowds hung upon his eloquent tongue. It used to be said that the brilliant and heroic Dr. Cheever drove his congregation away in New York by his bold denunciation of negro slavery. That doctrine does not hold water; for at that very time, Mr. Beecher, who was an equally zealous opponent of slavery, was attracting crowds that overflowed upon the sidewalk. It was the "how" that made the difference. His congregation with perpetual philippic against the great abomination; and did not give his people enough of those rich experimental and spiritual discourses which no man could excel in America. Beecher's is excellent fare; but he lectured alone three times a day, and on every day, is rather too much of a good thing. The mistake of the heroic pastor of the "Church of the Puritans" was during a few years of his noble life, was simply a mistake of judgment as to methods. All honor to the grand old man in the placid retirement of his sun-set years! He has wrought a magnificent life-work. Prof. J. Addison Alexander once said to me in the year 1852, "When I have a spare Sabbath in New York, I always go to hear Dr. George B. Cheever." He had not yet become too much a man of one idea in the pulpit. Courage is always popular; but it must be regulated by sound judgment.

To gain the ears of the people, and to win the affections of people, is as much a part of every Christian minister's duty as it is to study his Bible. What is the use of studying the Bible if we cannot get people to hear us expound it? The secret of a true, legitimate and permanent popularity is this: First, keep your heart strong and sweet, and love and courageous, by a constant life in Jesus Christ; and secondly, take a personal interest in everybody. To every human being on this globe, nobody is quite as important as his own self. This is not vanity, or egotism, or self-conceit; it is an instinct. God's solemn charge to every immortal child of His is "take heed to yourselves." Self-denial is Christ's; self-neglect is destruction. The man who rolls in the ash-barrels from the sidewalk is a more important person to himself than Prince Bismarck. What becomes of the German Empire is of less consequence to that little fellow than that he should earn a dime to buy his bread.

Every ambassador of Christ should avail himself of this instinct, and use it. He should aim to find out the personal character, condition and needs of every

person within his reach. He should put himself into personal sympathy with everybody. The congregation should have pouring in plain truths from the minister they love. And every one who is called to preach the gospel is bound to preach it winsomely as well as boldly—whether his parish be in the city or in the rural village, or in the crowded hive of a great city. Popularity is power. Use it for God.—Evang. gelist.

Family Prayers. There is one mark of a household in which God is known and loved, which is too often wanting in our day; I mean the practice of family prayer. Depend upon it, the worth of a practice of that kind can only be measured by its effects during a long period of time; and family prayers, though occupying only a few minutes, do make a great difference in any household at the end of the year. How, indeed, can it be otherwise, when each morning, and perhaps each evening, too, all the members of the family—both the young, the parents and the children, the master and the servants—meeting on a footing of perfect equality before the Eternal, in whose presence each is as nothing, yet to whom each is so infinitely dear, that He has redeemed for each a precious life, and who, how must not the bad spirits that are the enemies of pure and bright family life flee away—the spirits of envy and pride and untruthfulness and sloth, and the whole tribe of evil thoughts—and, in their place, the spirits of love, of holiness of old and young alike, who, as He brings us one by one nearer to the true end of our existence, so does He alone make us to be "of one mind in a house" here, within the narrow presence of each house circle, and hereafter in that common meeting on a footing of perfect equality before the Eternal, in whose presence each is as nothing, yet to whom each is so infinitely dear, 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