

Some Observations.

BY J. H. GAMBERELL.

If people are profited by what they read—and they are, if they read after clean, sacred-hearted writers—then they ought to be profited by many things they see. All careful observation is good, either for inspiration or warning. Every event teaches some wholesome lessons. Noting some things that have come to pass, and keeping track of them, more or less, this writer has learned some things worth mentioning, may be.

1. If it be true that "the prayer-meeting is the pulse of the church," then two other things are also true, namely: Many churches have very little pulse, therefore very little vitality, and that little vitality is almost entirely of the feminine gender. This is both a volume of praise, and condemnation, distributed to the sexes involved, according to their deeds.

2. If Dr. Henson stated the truth when he said: "A third class of church members are the 'Lily Baptists'; they toll not, neither do they spin," then the Lily Baptists are most likely in the majority, the world over. It is perhaps true that most Baptists never toll nor spin, religiously, unless they are tolled with and spun by some other church member. "The Lily Baptists" are a great burden to the churches. They neither ornament nor serve. When they die about all that can be said of them is: "He was born in the year —; joined the church in —; and died —." If the pastor wrote the obituary, and dared express his heart's wish, he would say: "May his tribe grow less."

3. The P. P. members are very valuable to a church. These are the praying, paying people. The two together. They are the spiritual Siamese twins. It runs about as follows: "No pray no pay; no pay no pray." "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." The over-mastering temptation common to a vast number of the church members, is not to do their part in supporting the work of their churches. The overmatch for this temptation is earnest prayer. If all church members were praying people, all difficulties in church finances would be solved once and forever. It is unmistakable that one should pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as in heaven," and do nothing to disseminate a knowledge of that kingdom and will; prayer does not produce, nor even permit religious idleness.

4. He who wrote: "Do not view me with a critic's eye," had knowledge of a great evil under the sure criticism of the carping sort, is no evidence of either a sound mind or a good heart. It is generally good evidence of a sad defect in both regions. The Pharisees were great critics, but who thinks of them as models in Christian living and conduct? Christ knew they were grievously wrong in their hearts and their thinking. Every real Christian knows the same thing, and commiserates their great weaknesses. Likely it has always been true that the most unreasonable critics are those who have "a form of Godliness, but deny the power thereof." The church member given to criticism is not spiritually minded. Some church members are never suited by what their churches do, looking to furthering the cause of Christ. They are strong on economy, in religious enterprises, give little or nothing themselves, but criticize what others do for Christ, while they spend \$5.00 to \$20.00 per month on mere "social" fads, card parties, theatres, dancing, etc. The non-going-to-church members are a caution as critics. They likely do not give an hour a year to studying the interest of their churches or the cause generally, and therefore know nothing of the needs of either. Nevertheless they are prolific of criticisms of those who do know, and respond to the demands made upon intelligent Christian men and women. The home and neighborhood critic who, if ever, rarely attends church, is a real thorn in the flesh to all good people. They set their families against churches, and as far as their influence extends their churches suffer in the estimation of their neighbors. No sermon, nor other service ever receives a word of commendation from their lips. That people are being saved and the gospel is being sent to benighted lands affords them no pleasure. They have no appetite for sweets, but their tastes call for acids, and bitter things. To all human appearances "the motives of sin" are still at work in them. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

5. Likely there never was a preacher who could not be justly criticised on some point. Preachers will be imperfect while they remain flesh and blood like the people to whom they minister. Kind, personal criticism is helpful to and appreciated by any conscientious preacher, but the gad-about critic is the bane of his life and the obstructor of his work. In another State a church excluded several members on the charge: "For unjustly criticising and injuring the influence of the pastor, thereby hurting the church." That church had the correct idea, namely: "We are bound to take care of our pastor's influence if we are to have the best results from his work." Who will say the church made a mistake in the matter?

More often than otherwise a little knot of heartless critics are responsible for changes in the pastorates of our churches. The churches ignore the hurtful work of their critics, retaining them in fellowship till, heartsore, the pastor declines to bear further torture and hindrance to his work. In a few years, at most, he goes, as did his

predecessors, the victim of a small number of church member critics. So one after another, faithful men, seeking to win souls to Christ, come and go. Meanwhile souls are going the death way, the church is in a state of irritation, and being discredited in the community. No church that is oblivious to the conditions of success in its pastorate can have the respect and confidence of thinking people. An ordinary farmer protects his horse against bad treatment, because he wants the best possible service, even if he is not humane. The churches that are having constant changes in their pastorates are identically the churches that permit evil-spirited members to obstruct the work of their pastors. The axe needs to be laid to the root of the trouble that there may be peace and prosperity in Zion. Failure in plain duty on this vital point accounts for the lamentable condition of many churches today. God withholds his blessings from the church that will not honor and protect his ministers. The course pursued often enables a small worldly minority to control the church in its pastoral relations. This is subversive and destructive of Scriptural ideas and harmony. As one who has been singularly blessed in this respect, I appeal to churches for the protection of their pastors against unreasonable members. Let the churches hear the word of the Lord through the Prophet: "Saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophet no harm." Recently a pastor, in another State, celebrated his 46th anniversary as pastor of a village church. It was a great occasion—made great because the pastor had been faithful in his office all these eventful years, and in turn the church had taken care of the pastor, augmenting his usefulness in every way possible. No one could remain in that church and criticize its pastor. This writer has personal knowledge of the delightful situation that "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The pastor referred to is one who brings things to pass, too. He is no sermonette preacher, dealing in generalities and syllabub. He is a leader, and a feeder of the flock of God. He insists upon a clean, right-living church membership, and has it. Dancing, card-playing, worldliness find no room in his church, and yet the "society" people belong to and honor it by their lives. And it may be added that society in that town is of the kind that contributes to making delightful homes, great men and women. What Christian wants any other kind of society?—The Baptist Standard.

A Tonic.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

The Bible is a wonderful pharmacopoeia for the soul. It contains plenty of stimulants to arouse, and not a few anodynes for aching hearts.

Among its many tonic texts is this one which the ancient Psalmist used long centuries ago—"the Lord is my strength." This is a tonic that meets a universal demand; for none of us have any spiritual strength in ourselves. Just as our bodies derive all their vigor from the food we eat, and every oak up in yonder forest draws its vigor from the surrounding earth and air, so do our souls derive all their spiritual power from a source outside of us.

Who are the heroes presented to us in God's Word? Are they the men of native genius, skilled in learning or philosophy? No; they are the Enoch who walked with God—the Joseph who conquered sensual temptation because God was with him—the Elijah who stood like a rock against the tides of idolatry—the Paul who quailed not before Nero because "the Lord stood with him"—and the Daniel who feared neither the king nor his lions.

Daniel gives us the secret of his strength in his three-times-a-day interviews with God. The conduit of prayer fed his soul as the subterranean springs feed a well, and keep it full during the droughts of summer.

We use "tonics" when we are run down; and in like manner the divine strength is "made perfect in our weakness." I understand by this that this power from above is most conspicuous when our weakness is felt most keenly. We must first be emptied of self-conceit and self-confidence. The purpose of some hard trials and sore humiliations is to get the accursed spirit of self out of our hearts. When we have been emptied of self-trust, we are in a better condition to be filled with light in the inner man by the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter had an immense confidence in Peter when he boasted of his loyalty to his Master; but after his pride had caught its awful fall, he got his endowment of power from on high, and then the man who had been frightened by a servant girl faced the whole Sanhedrin! We have got to realize our utter feebleness; we have got to know that vain is the help of man; we have got to let go of broken weapons before we lay hold of the Everlasting Arm.

That poor woman who had tried all the doctors in her neighborhood and only became weaker in body and poorer in purse, is a vivid illustration of an invalid soul. She despaired of human help, and then came crouching at the feet of the Son of God. One touch of his garment sent a new tide of health through her veins. Contact with Jesus, contact in faith, contact in sincere prayer, brings currents of divine power into our souls so that we can "do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us."

This is the very lesson that every sinner must learn before he can be converted. No Bartimeus can get his eyes opened until he feels and admits his utter blindness and begs Jesus to give him sight. No John B. Gough is ever delivered from his degraded drunkenness until he prays Jesus Christ to cast the seven devils of lust for the bottle out of him. When Christ comes in,

the bottled devils go out. My dear friend Gough always claimed that his victory over the enemy was a "supernatural" work—the very thing which modern skepticism hoots at. It was that or nothing. A gospel that brings no supernatural element into weak and wicked human nature would not be worth the paper on which it was printed. If the Lord Jesus Christ does not endow a frail sinner with supernatural strength to resist terrible temptation, then Christianity is a delusion.

This has been the crucial test, and it is so still; this test Christianity has stood triumphantly in myriads of cases. "The Lord stood with me and strengthened me," the same hero who said that, said also, "When I am weak then am I strong." Just as soon as we get emptied of self-trust, the Lord Jesus comes in and strengthens us. There is many a minister, many a teacher, many a worker whose testimony is that when he put himself like an emptied vessel under the descending power from on high, then he was filled from the fullness of God.

Faith implies a partnership. Our weakness is linked to the omnipotence of Christ Jesus. We furnish the weakness and he furnishes the strength. The hungry baby furnishes the month, and the loving mother furnishes the nourishing milk. Both the mother and the darling are made happy. The supply will never give out for us weak, hungry souls just as long as our blessed nourisher and strengthener keeps saying: "Come to me, trust me, obey me; my grace is sufficient for thee." When we do obey our loving Master we are "strengthened with all the might of his glory."

Turn to that grandly tonic text, my friend. You will find it in the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians. The literal rendering of the Greek would be, "informed with all force." When you feel weak; when you get despondent; when your arms hang down; and your own strength has gone out of you, then go straight to him who can reinforce you with his almighty power, and for his own glory. Those who do thus go to him renew their strength so that they can mount up with wings as eagles; they can run without being weary and walk without fainting.—Selected.

Christ Our Pilot.

REV. THEODORE CUYLER.

"Jesus, Saviour, pilot me!" is one of the most beautiful contributions to hymnology by any American hand during this generation. Its author was the Rev. Edward Hopper, at that time the beloved pastor of the Church of the Sea and Land in Market street, New York. The same title is given to our divine Master in Tennyson's exquisite lines, "Crossing the bar." All through our experiences in life we have Jesus at the helm. He knows where the shoals and the sunken rocks are and where the safe deep water is also; if we are wise, we will let the Omnipotent Pilot do the steering. His disciples had a rough night of it while he was asleep in the stern of the boat; he was teaching them a lesson; and when in their extremity they called up the Pilot, the storm lulled, and their fishing-smack swam safe into the harbor.

It is a good thing for us that we cannot foresee tempests or trials, for then we might be frightened out of undertaking many a voyage at the call of duty. When Paul set off for Rome he could not discern a prison or a blood-stained axe of martyrdom waiting for him in the imperial city. When Clarkson, Wilberforce and Sharp set in motion their noble enterprise of overthrowing the African slave-trade they could not anticipate the long years of ferocious opposition that they were doomed to encounter. They tugged at the oars, and left the helm in the Pilot's hands. The five praying college-students beside the haystack at Williamston were launching a little boat in simple faith; what head winds it might have to face, they did not know or care. The Master took the helm, and lo, their tiny craft was the pioneer of all the vast fleet of American missions to heathendom. No penitent soul who comes to Jesus can foresee all the obstacles, all the temptations and trials that He before him. It is well that he cannot. He might be frightened back, or be hamstrung with discouragements. There are too many "Pilabes" who get bemired in the Slough of Despond and sneak back into a life of worldliness; the genuine "Christian gets out on the side toward heaven."

Let us all learn to thank God for difficulties; they are a part of our discipline. Canaan lies on the other side of the Red Sea and the Jordan; we need not cross either of them till we come to them. God can divide the big sea as easy as he can dry up the little river. When we come to the sea, the voice of Providence is "go forward!" and the waters part asunder. When we reach the flowing Jordan and our feet touch the stream, behold it is vanished, and we go through dry-shod! The story of Christian faith and its frequent deliverances is often like a post-script to the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews. When we voyagers get safely in the desired haven up yonder we may take great delight into looking over our log-books and discovering how wonderfully our Pilot brought us through dark nights and dangerous channels. Pastors often discover very dense fogs lying over their churches; let them never forget that there is One to whom the darkness shineth as the day.

Faith's real office and faith's real victory is in trusting the helm to Jesus in the fog and through the dark hours. Everybody can trust God in the sunshine and over smooth water. It is easy to commit our way to the

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