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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Religious.

THE BREATH OF PRAYER.

AN ALLEGORY.

I was in a dream, and methought I looked upon the world (as the author of "Pilgrim's Progress" did in his dream), and saw the number of people pursuing their daily business in it. There were all ranks, and all ages; rich and poor, old and young, pursued their daily calling. But as I looked down upon them, I could see pressing on each some pain, sorrow, sickness, anxiety, or disappointment; I could fancy that I saw the wound in their heart which this daily trouble made. In some, it was much less than in others,—and these methought, were those who, in the Holy Scripture's words, "cast their care upon God," but no one was entirely exempt. While lamenting in my own mind the sorrows and troubles of this lower world, I seemed to see ascending up from many, many corners of the world, little pure white clouds of soft sweet vapour; and a voice told me this was the "breath of prayer,"—prayers offered for others; which came up even as we were told of old (2 Chron. xxxiii. 27,) that when the Levites and priests arose to bless the people, "their voice was heard and their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, even to heaven." Then I gazed more earnestly upon the soft white clouds; and I saw that when they had ascended to Him whose grace alone gave them power, and whose Holy Spirit had suggested them, they were sent down to fulfil their mission on earth.

Then I prayed for sight to be given me to understand these things; and for a few passing moments it was granted me, as in the vision of a dream, I saw the larger of the clouds, which were the breath of the prayers of a whole united congregation, descend as a blessing on thrones, nations, principalities and powers, dispelling sickness and famine from their lands, forming a shelter over them, that "the sun should not burn them by day, neither the moon by night;" but I turned from these to watch what was even more interesting to myself—the prayers of individuals,—of solitary weak creatures like myself.

I saw the earnest prayer ascend from the depths of a heart of a grateful child, and fall as balm upon the distant parent's wounded heart. I saw the prayer of the mother fly to her child in a distant country, and shield him from some danger he could not see, some temptation he could not anticipate.

I saw the prayer of a friend wing its heaven-directed way to the heart of a distant friend; the wound in that heart was large and recent; gold and jewels and precious things, even all that are in the earth, could have no effect upon that wound; but the precious little white cloud dropped like a balm upon that heart; and when an approaching hour of heavenly trial came (likely to re-open the wound, and especially mentioned in the prayer of the friend) the soft balm spread more and more over the heart and its healing began.

I saw one walking carelessly in the joy of his heart, and on the very brink of yielding to a strong temptation. I trembled as I watched him, for I saw that he was not looking out for the "way to escape," which God hath told us that He has made "with every temptation;" and therefore would not be able to find it. I felt as if it were now too late for all hope, and was turning away, that I might not see the sad sight of one running heedlessly into grievous sin; when I beheld a soft bright cloud hover before him, and he looked on it and raised his eyes up to it, and from it methought up to heaven, and he prayed to "Our Father"—and the temptation passed away, and the field was won.

And the little cloud was the breath of prayer, which was put up for him by the grateful heart of one of whom, as a child, he had loved and tended, at the very hour when he was in danger of falling away from the good path. That heart that had put up many prayers for him, and now this one, had come in the hour of need.

Some hearts I saw more constantly soothed by a great many clouds hovering over them; these I knew were those who had made themselves loved by many, and won the prayers of the poor. Others had quite a flock of very

minute clouds winging their way to them, and these tiny clouds were ever brighter and sweeter than the others; these were the prayers of the little children, for those who had taught, protected, and loved them.

Some men I watched doing wrong, and walking wildly in wicked ways; towards a few even of these I saw clouds of the "breath of prayer" coming gently.

They little thought any one praying for them,—they did not think about prayer at all; yet some one to whom they had done some kindness long since forgotten by themselves, or perhaps some who had loved them "not wisely but too well," prayed for the wanderers now, and by degrees one or two of these wanderers did turn from their evil ways, and I thought (though I could not be sure) prayer might be one of the ways of "saving a soul from death and hiding a multitude of sins."

Wonderful things I thought I saw, and far more wonderful things I might have seen; but the vision of thought vanished and was gone.

But the tale of it shall have not been told in vain, if one only who reads this, old or young, rich or poor, the oldest person or the very weakest and least child amongst them, shall understand what I want to teach,—that God has put into their hands a powerful means of doing good to others.

They can pray for them. Pray then, O reader! Pray for your parents, for your friends, for your minister; pray also for your school fellows and teachers. Pray for your enemies, and for those that "despitefully use you;" pray for those who are ignorant and untaught; pray for those who you think are committing sin.

Pray when you are happy, for your sorrowing brothers and sisters; for then you should especially try to cheer and comfort those less fortunate than yourself.

Pray when you are sad for all such as are like yourself, suffering under the "changes and chances of this mortal world;" for then should your heart be humbled and softened by adversity, and ready to sympathise more deeply with the feelings of others.

Pray at all times and seasons, "pray without ceasing," and may God Almighty hear and grant your petitions!—*The Church.*

THE END OF THE YEAR.

BY MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

December is often a sad month. Death, however we may divest it of its more glaring terrors, is a thing to make us quiet and thoughtful, and to clothe "the landscape of our life" in sombre hues. And there is so much of dying now. The flowers are dead, and have fallen for their rest on the soddened ground. The leaves have dropped one by one silently as we drop, when our end comes, unnoticed, and mute. And the year is dying. It has well nigh lived its life—its life of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow, of ease and pain, of rest and work. It is departing, as its fellows have all done before it, leaving us only a new weight of responsibility, and its memories, to help us in the future. It is like parting with a dear old friend every time the year leaves us, albeit we appear so glad to exchange it for the one that is fresh and new, and as yet all untried. For we have had happy days in this old year, dear friends have we not? days in which the cup of blessing has seemed to run over, and a Father's presence and a Saviour's smile have gladdened our hearts and filled the hours with sunshine. Not all sweetness (as becomes a true friend) has the old year brought us. It had its deep sorrows, and its darkened days.—There have been times when we have been obliged to cast ourselves down in brokenness of heart, and say, "No sorrow is like unto my sorrow"—days when the fountain of joy has seemed fully spent, and only the bitterness of the "waters of Marah" has met our parched lips. But then, we have not been left to mourn alone our unutterable grief.—The Comforter has stood by with the cup of healing in his hand. We have sat beneath his shadow with great delight, and his fruit has been sweet to our taste. It is true that we have come up from the wilderness, but it has been leaning on the Beloved.

And the old year has taught us some good lessons. Joy and sorrow, summer and winter

have been our teachers. We may have been over slow to learn, but some things which we have conned over in the hard school of experience must have sunk into our hearts, and will remain with us, however rapidly the waters of future years roll over them. Every year brings its lessons. It is our own fault if we have not this year learnt at least some, if we do not know more than we did of our own sinfulness and weakness, and of the boundless love and kindness of our all-pitiful Father in heaven.

But the end of the year may well be sorrowful, because of our many shortcomings and great wrong-doings. We have not done what we might have done. Opportunities have come, power has been given; God has plainly said, "Go work to-day in my vineyard," and we have turned back in idleness and irresolution, speaking no word, putting not our hand to the work which has waited for us, seeking not to do the good which the Father would have us.—So we must have some sorrow at the close of the year, and not altogether undeserved, seeing that sorrow follows sin and neglect of duty so surely.

We may have left some treasures by the road-side of the past year over whose loss we mourn. Some dear companion whose feet have with ours trodden the steep hill-side and the rugged road, has fallen asleep in Jesus. And now we have to go alone, and uncheered by the voices that used to bid us God speed, and sing the home songs with us.

But the end of the year is a time of gladness because of the Christmas festivities. The time when families unite, and parted friends meet and enjoy old pleasures once again, may well be anticipated with delight and looked back upon with gratitude. It is such gladness that amid the partings, and absences, and trials of love, to which this life is subjected there are some bright spots toward which our weary eyes turn wistfully, and in which we may find amends for our grief. And such bright spots are the Christmases of our lives, the time of gaiety, and mirth, and music, of love, and kindness, and charity, dear old time of peace on earth and good-will to men; the time when we forgive our fellows all their little sins against us, when we take the hands that have been long estranged, the hearts that have been divided, may be united and beat happily again. Moreover, it is very meet that Christmas should be a happy time, because we keep it as the anniversary of the day on which salvation came unto us. One thing is worth considering; it is not yet the end of the year, there yet remain some days on which we may strive to put right, as leave some things that are wrong; if we have any harsh or unkind thoughts toward a brother, we may now go to him and get forgiven and be received back to his heart.

We are in time for the new year, we may go forth to meet it gladly and trustfully, resolving to do better than we have done before. But not in our own strength, otherwise we shall do just the same as we have already done; we shall fall as we have fallen, and the good that we might do will be left undone still. After all the years of our lives tell a sad story; we might not hope to get the "Well done" at all unless we heard it, not because of our deserts, but because of the love of the Saviour. It shall be a glad fading away of the old year, and a glad beginning of the new if He who is the Bright and Morning Star will smile upon us blessing and forgivingly.

Protestantism no failure.

An Episcopal clergyman in New York recently delivered several discourses on the startling theme, "Failure of Protestantism." During the session of the Episcopal General Convention, an address of great power and eloquence, "in defence of the principles of the Anglican Reformation, now imperilled in the Episcopal Church in England and the United States," was delivered by Rev. Dr. Cummins, Assistant Bishop of Kentucky, in the course of which he concisely but completely refuted the preposterous charge. He said:

Failure of Protestantism! Why, the very liberty by which this man spoke the word and was not molested, is the fruit of that Protestantism which he pronounces a failure. Freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of action, freedom of conscience—all that makes this great age what it is, this noble

civilization, this progress, this missionary spirit that girdles the earth, all this wonderful development is the fruit of Protestantism. Protestantism a failure! Why, I stepped out from my country home one morning last summer, and found a huge owl sitting in the branches of a beautiful tree before my door. I was amazed to find that I could get almost within reach of him; and when I peered him, I found his great eyes blinking and winking as though he seemed to say, "This daylight is a failure after all!" I have no doubt the light of Protestantism is too strong for my brother.

No, my brethren. The same mistake is made by some of our brethren that I made when I first saw the great Mississippi, as it came rolling from the mountains of snow, with a force and speed and volume that awe the beholder. In places it strikes the bank with such force that a reflex eddy is formed, in which you may be floated up the river, without rowing, for half a mile. These men have got into the eddy, and they think the river is going back. They mistake the eddy for the grand stream. But as at times the river changes its course, and sometimes cuts right through part of a town, tearing away gigantic bluffs perhaps, and destroys the eddy, the day will come when these brethren will be swept along with the current that is carrying Protestantism, and nothing but Protestantism to the final triumph of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

The Rev. Geo. W. Clark, in the *Baptist Quarterly* for October, thus closes a searching article on as in which is really devoid of the mystery with which ignorance and superstition have surrounded it:

The reason why this sin can never be forgiven, is found in the nature of the sin, and in the departure of the Spirit. It is not because it is impossible for God to forgive it, nor because of a want of efficacy in the blood of Christ, for his blood cleanseth from all sin.—First, it is the extreme of all sin. It is an insult which always oversteps the line between God's patience and his wrath, and which he has determined to visit with his vengeance.—And second, the Holy Spirit, the only agent of regeneration, ceases to strive with the one that blasphemes him, and leaves him forever. He is thus left to a most fearful depravity and hardness of heart. He is the worst of that class described by the apostle as "past feeling."

To the question, *Can this sin be now committed?* it must be answered, Most assuredly. The Holy Spirit has come into the world.—He is among the followers of Christ, and he convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The Holy Spirit can thus be directly opposed and blasphemed. He comes in contact with men, and under the light of the gospel they have all the knowledge necessary for committing so terrible a sin.

My Father's Will.

Mr. John Price, a pious old man, was walking one day on the road from the farm to the sanctuary, with the New Testament in his hand, when a friend met him, and said: "Good morning Mr. Price." "Ah! good morning," replied the aged pilgrim, "I am reading my Father's will as I walk along." "Well, what has he left you?" said his friend. "Why he has bequeathed me a hundred fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting." This shrewd and beautiful reply produced a happy effect on the mind of his Christian friend, who was in sorrowful circumstances, and he went on his way rejoicing.

Dr. Payson's counsel to a minister was:—"Paint Jesus Christ upon your canvass, and then hold him up to the people; but so hold him up that not even your little finger can be seen." Nothing is more disgusting to the pious hearer in the sanctuary than the sight of a preacher in the pulpit showing himself off and concealing the master.

It matters not what a man loses, if he saves his soul; but, if he lose his soul, it matters not what he saves.