

AT THE GATE.

"For, behold the kingdom of God is within you."

Thy kingdom here?
Lord, can it be?
Searching and seeking every where
For many a year,
"Thy kingdom come" has been my prayer,
Was that dear kingdom all the while so near?

Blinded and dull
With selfish sin,
Have I been sitting at the gate
Called Beautiful,
Where Thy fair angel stands and waits,
With hand upon the lock, to let me in?

Was I the wall
Which barred the way,
Darkening the glory of Thy grace,
Hiding the ray
Which, shining out as from thy very face,
Had shown to other men the perfect day?

Was I the bar
Which shut me out
From the full joyance which they taste
Whose spirits are
Within Thy Paradise embraced—
Thy blessed Paradise, which seems so far?

Let me not sit
Another hour,
Idly waiting what is mine to win,
Blinded in wit,
Lord Jesus, rend these walls of self and sin,
Beat down the gate, that I may enter in.
—The English Pulpit.

The Pulpit.

PASTORAL VISITATION.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

"Volumes by the cart-load have been published on Homiletics; but pastoral work, like swimming, must be learned by practice. Some ministers dislike it; a celebrated pulpit orator once told me that it cost a severe strain on his nerves and exhausted more of his force to spend half an hour with the afflicted, than it did to prepare his two sermons." Very likely; but does not a minister's commission extend to "healing the broken hearted" as well as to preaching the Word? Some begrudge the time, and fancy that they can employ themselves more profitably over their books. But there are several solid arguments for the good old fashion of pastoral visitation, that it is well to present afresh from time to time; some of the younger brethren may be so disturbed by current clamors about "the pulpit losing power," and about the necessity of a minister's "keeping abreast of advancing thought," etc., etc., that they may dismiss the work of visitation as both unimportant, and a waste of precious time.

The word "minister," be it remembered, does not signify a preacher; it signifies a servant, and it is the office of a minister to supply all the legitimate wants of the flock over whom he is installed. Only a portion of these wants can be supplied from the pulpit. Granting that the pulpit is the chief seat of power and spiritual influence, yet even these may be immensely augmented by thorough pastoral visitation.

(1) A minister who does not know his people by sight, works at sad disadvantage. Everybody likes to be recognized. "I left Dr. B's church," said a gentleman to me, "because he never knew me when I met me." (2) Pastoral visitation enables a minister to discover his people's peculiarities, and thus enlarges his knowledge of what is next in importance to the Bible—human nature. If he be a sagacious teacher he will use this knowledge in the preparation of practical discourses.

(3) The pastor not only discovers individual characteristics, but also the deepest spiritual necessities of his flock. If he mingles with them freely, he will soon find that they do not want cold intellectual treatises or frequent discussions about all the phases of "advanced thought," "higher criticism," or scientific skepticism. Some of them may light upon quite enough of these topics elsewhere. They want simple, strong, warm-blooded, practical discourses on the points of everyday duties; how to serve God, how to combat sin, how to conduct their business righteously, how to train their families, how to bear trials, how to be useful, how to grow in character and Christliness, and how to prepare for heaven.

When you talk with your people at their firesides, you will seldom hear them praise what you fondly consider your "great sermons;" they are a thousand fold more likely to thank you for the simple, direct, loving words which come right home to their own conditions and touched the right spot. Such close contacts help a minister amazingly; the chief merit of good gunnery is to hit the mark. Napoleon used to ride over his battle-fields after his victories; he discovered where the shots had struck.

(4) Pastoral visitation enables a minister to discover the wounded hearts, and to bind up the bruised spirits. A loving talk, well seasoned with the fourteenth chapter of John, and the thirty-fourth Psalm, may do good like a medicine.

(5) It enables the pastor to become acquainted with the children, who are, in one sense, the most important portion of his charge. If he loses his hold on them, his church is fatally crippled; if they lose their early years without a strong trend towards Christ their whole future is

imperilled. (6) House to house intercourse wisely conducted, gives a pastor a great grip on the hearts of his congregation. He can do them but little good if they do not love him. To every young minister I would venture the suggestion that next to your hold on God is your hold on your people; as long as you can maintain that personal hold on their respect and their affections, they will stand any amount of close, pungent preaching, but if they do not love you they will not stand anything. It often requires a mere whiff of wind to blow a minister out of his pulpit, if he is not rooted in the respect and the affections of his flock. (7) When you visit your hearers in their homes, or drop in to have a word with them at their places of business, you may catch the opportunity to follow up your sermon, to converse with the unconverted, and to guide awakened souls to the Saviour. Individual work tells the most; men are saved or lost "one by one."

All this line of pastoral effort requires brains and good sense, and patience and a spirit of consecration to the sovereign purpose of saving souls. It consumes time, but where can it be spent more profitably? If any minister fancies himself to be too intellectual or cultured to undertake such patient labors for his Master, then let him demit his office and take to the lecture platform, the professor's chair, or the domain of polite letters. The amount of time devoted to pastoral visitation must be regulated by the extent of the parish and other circumstances. One hour a day is too much for trivial gossip; four or five hours are not too much for genuine pastoral service. Once a year at least we should enter every house in our parish, and as much oftener as providential orderings and the calls of duty prompt. There are some of us to whom it is no small hardship to forego many literary luxuries, and to surrender some literary ambitions. But it was a part of our self-consecration to give up all these in order to live, and to preach, and to toil more undividedly for the salvation of souls and the spread of Christ's kingdom. No vain dream is it that we "choose the better part," and we may humbly trust that it shall not be taken away.

A PRACTICAL HELP.

About five years ago, one cold Sunday morning, a young man crept out of a market-house in Philadelphia, into the nipping air, just as the bells began to ring for church. He had slept under a stall all night, or rather lain there in a stupor from a long debauch.

His face, which had once been delicate and refined, was blue from cold and blotched with sores; his clothes were of a fine texture, but they hung on him in rags covered with mud.

He staggered, faint with hunger and exhaustion; the snowy streets, the gaily dressed crowds thronging to church, swam before his eyes; his brain was dazed for want of usual stimulant.

He gasped with a horrible sick thirst, a mad craving for liquor, which the sober man cannot imagine. He looked down at the ragged coat flapping about him, at his brimless hat, to find something he could pawn for whiskey, but he had nothing. Then he dropped upon a stone step, leading, as it happened, into a church.

Some elegantly-dressed women, seeing the wretched sot, drew their garments closer, and hurried by on the other side.

One elderly woman turned to look at him just as two young men of his own age halted.

"That is George C—," said one. "Five years ago he was a promising lawyer in P—. His mother and sister live there still. They think he is dead."

"What did it?"

"Trying to live in a fashionable set first, then brandy. Come on; we shall be late for church."

The lady went up to George C—, and took his arm.

"Come inside," she said sternly, with a secret loathing in her heart.

"The gospel is for such as you. Come and pray to God that perhaps at this late date he may lead you to redemption."

He stared stupidly at her.

She lectured him for some time sharply, trying to compress the truths of Christianity into a few terse sentences.

But the young man's brain did not want truth or the gospel; it wanted physical stimulant. His head dropped on his breast. She left him, going with a despairing sigh, into the church.

A few minutes later a gentleman came up who had different ideas of teaching Christ. He saw with a glance the deadly pallor under the bloated skin.

"You have not had breakfast yet, my dear friend," he said briskly. "Come, let us go together and find some."

George C— muttered something about "a trifle" and "a tavern." But his friend drew him within his own, and hurried him, trembling and resisting, down the street to a little hall where a table was set with strong coffee and a hot, savory meal. It was surrounded by men and women as wretched as himself.

He ate and drank ravenously. When he had finished, his eyes were almost clear, and his step steady, as he came up to his new friend, and said:

"Thanks. You have helped me." "Let me help you farther. Sit down with me and listen to some music."

Somebody touched a few plaintive notes on an organ and a hymn was sung, one of the old, simple strains which mothers sing to their children and bring themselves nearer to God. The tears stood in George C—'s eyes. He listened while a few of the words of Jesus were read. Then he rose to go.

"I was once a man like you," he said, holding out his hand. "I believe in Christ; but it is too late now."

"It is not too late!" cried his friend.

It is needless to tell how he pleaded with him, nor how for months he renewed his efforts.

George C— has been for four years a sober man. He fills a position of trust in the town where he was born, and his mother's heart is made glad in her old age.

A SILENT PREACHER.

A single verse written on paper, now yellow with age, hangs on the wall of a nobleman's study in England. It has a remarkable history, and has, in two notable instances, at least, been blessed of God to conversion. The verse was originally composed by Dr. Valpy, the eminent scholar and author of standard school books. He was converted late in life, and wrote this verse as a confession of faith:

"In peace let me resign my breath,
And thy salvation see;
My sin deserves eternal death,
But Jesus died for me."

On one occasion the eminent Dr. Marsh was visiting the house of Lord Roden, where he held a Bible reading with the family. He mentioned Dr. Valpy's conversion by way of illustration in the course of his remarks, and recited the verse. Lord Roden was particularly struck with the lines, wrote them out, and affixed them to the walls of his study, where they still are.

Lord Roden's hospitable mansion was often full of visitors, among whom were many old army officers. One of these was General Taylor, who served with distinction under Wellington at Waterloo. He had not, at that time, thought much on the subject of religion, and preferred to avoid all discussion of it. But soon after the paper was hung up, he went into the study to talk with his friend alone, and his eyes rested for a few moments upon the motto.

Later in the day Lord Roden upon entering his study came upon the general standing before the paper and reading it with earnest face.

At another visit the host noticed that whenever General Taylor was in the study his eyes rested on the motto. At length Lord Roden broke the ice by saying, "Why, general, you will soon know that verse by heart." "I know it now by heart," replied the general, with emphasis and feeling.

A change came over the general's spirit and life. No one who was intimately acquainted with him could doubt its reality. During the following two years he corresponded readily with Lord Roden about the things which concerned his peace, always concluding his letters by quoting Dr. Valpy's verse. At the end of that time the physician who had attended General Taylor wrote to Lord Roden to say that his friend had departed in peace, and that the last words which fell from his dying lips were those which he had learned to love in his lifetime.

A young relative of the family, an officer lately returned from the Crimea, also saw it, but turned carelessly away.

Some months later Lord Roden received the intelligence that his young acquaintance was suffering from pulmonary disease, and was desirous of seeing him without delay.

As he entered the sick-room the dying man stretched out both hands to welcome him; at the same moment repeating Dr. Valpy's simple lines. "They have been God's message," he said, "of peace and comfort to my heart in this illness, when brought to my memory, after days of darkness and distress, by the Holy Ghost the Comforter."

It was eminently safe for the apostle Peter to write these words: "The word of the Lord endureth forever." He knew that God was eternal, and hence his word must be eternal. Both are indissolubly linked together by a superhuman vitality.

A LIFE THAT TOLD.

Thirty years ago the region about London docks contained as large a heathen population as any district in Africa. Back of the huge warehouses were "innumerable courts and alleys filled with fog and dirt, and every horror of sight, sound and smell. It was a rendezvous for the lowest types of humanity." The wealthy and influential class in this settlement were the rum-sellers and keepers of gambling-hells. Children were born and grew to middle age in these precincts who never had heard the name of Christ, except in an oath. Thirty thousand souls were included in one parish here but the clergyman never ventured out of the church to teach.

A young man named Charles Lowder, belonging to an old English family, happened to pass through this district just after leaving Oxford. His classmates were going into politics or the army, or to the bar, full of ambition and hope to make a name in the world; but Lowder heard, as he said, "a cry of mingled agony, suffering, laughter and blasphemy coming from these depths, that rang in his ears, go where he would." He resolved to give up all other work in the world to help these people. He took a house in one of the lowest slums, and lived in it.

"It is only one of themselves that they will hear; not patronizing visitors." He preached every day in the streets, and for months was pelted with bricksbats, shot at and driven back with curses. He had unfortunately no eloquence with which to teach them; he was a slow, stammering speaker, but he was bold, patient, and in earnest.

Year after year he lived among them. Even the worst ruffian learned to respect the tall, thin curate, whom he saw stopping the worst street fights, facing mobs, or nursing the victims of Asiatic cholera.

Mr. Lowder lived in London docks for twenty-three years. Night schools were opened, industrial schools, and refuges for drunkards, discharged prisoners and fallen women. A large church was built and several mission chapels. His chief assistants in this work were the men and women whom he had rescued from "the paths that abut on hell." A visitor to the church said "the congregation differs from others in that they are all in such deadly earnest."

Mr. Lowder broke down under his work, and rapidly grew into an old, care-worn man. He died in a village in the Tyrol, whither he had gone for a month's rest. He was brought back to the Docks where he had worked so long. Across the bridge, where he had once been chased by a furious mob, bent on his murder, his body was reverently carried, while the police were obliged to keep back the crowds of sobbing people who pressed forward to catch the last glimpse of "Father Lowder," as they called him. "No such funeral," says a London paper "has ever been seen in England."

A HUNDREDFOLD.

I knew a young Christian whose father and brothers were infidels. When he confessed Christ they disowned him and drove him from his home. But did he lose by this? Far from it. God raised up friends who cared for him and educated him. He became an eminent minister of the Gospel. Thousands of ministers and Christians love him as a brother in the Lord. He belongs no more to that household where ignorance and vice prevail. But he belongs to the household of faith—to the family of God. He knows that even now he is a joint heir with Christ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled. No men on earth are so rich in friends as those who have forsaken all human kindred and severed all human ties for the sake of Christ. God loves them; Christ loves them; all the good people on earth love them; the angels in heaven love them. They are happy now in the knowledge that since they belong to Christ, the King of kings, all things are theirs; and that He who is Lord of the world will make all things work together for their good.

In the reign of Charles I. a nobleman, who belonged to the Protestant party, was convicted of treason, deprived of all his estates, and cast into prison. There he began to study the Bible and became a Christian. A friend came to console with him on his fallen fortunes. But the imprisoned earl said: "No, congratulate me! I am a thousand times richer than before. Here in the dungeon I have come into the possession of such wealth and honors as I have never even dreamed of."

The visitor thought that he was crazy. But he had found the pearl of great price; he had become rich toward God. That full enjoyment of spiritual good he probably would not have experienced had he not been deprived of worldly good. His seeming loss, therefore, was great gain.

If, then, God rewards so bountifully those who make sacrifices for

His sake, why are not all Christians happy? The answer is easy—they don't forsake anybody or anything to follow Christ. They stumble after him, carrying all of the world that they can in their arms. They want the rewards of the service without its toil and self-denial—the harvest without sowing the seed. No wonder they are disappointed. But yet it is true now as in apostolic times that for all cheerful, loving sacrifices in his cause Christ will repay us a hundred-fold, even in this present time. If we do not live to reap all the blessed results, they will be the priceless heritage of our children.—The Interior.

THE EVIL ONE OVERCOME.

BY REV. W. W. VAN DUSEN.

Some persons find it hard to witness for Christ by the use of their voice even in the social means of grace.

Many, we fear, give up in despair and forsake the assembly of God's people when they know they will be expected to speak of their Christian experience. Sometimes the cross is harder to lift than at others. The enemy comes with especial power, and tempts those who are naturally timid by suggesting that they have nothing to say which will benefit others, or that if they do speak only words and not ideas will be expressed. Under such circumstances how is Satan to be put to flight. We reply:

1. By calling to mind that he is a liar whose business it is to deceive. Remember, too, that you and he are sworn enemies forever, and as an enemy he will naturally plot to deceive and injure you.

2. By calling on God for help who, in all our trials and distresses, is a "refuge" and "very present help."

3. By calling into activity that power which God has given to every man, namely, the human will, and arraying it openly and persistently against the foe. This last mentioned power I saw strikingly illustrated a few evenings since in a class meeting which I chanced to attend.

Sister A., a very timid and diffident person of only a few months' experience in the new life of walking with Jesus, was asked to speak. She seemed to make an effort to rise in response to the invitation of the leader, but still remained seated. All present felt and prayed for her; still there came no response. After a minute the leader asked another to speak, who did so. No sooner had this one ceased speaking than Sister A. rose and our heart responded with thankfulness that she had gained the victory. But no, she did not say a word, there she stood, while all felt something of the struggle going on within. Presently she sat down again, and soon all had spoken. The meeting was about to close; the leader rose to speak a few parting words of encouragement, when Sister A. again rose, and now her will, coupled with the help from Him whose determined witness she was, overcame the tempter, and her words came freely as she spoke of her love for Christ and His service.

When we will do the will of Christ, Satan shall be put to flight.

THE TOUCH OF THE SAVIOUR'S HAND.

Let me ask you, poor backslider, did you ever feel the touch of Jesus' hand? If so, you will know it again, for there is love in it. There is a story told in connection with our war of a mother who received a despatch that her boy was mortally wounded. She immediately went down to the front, for she knew that the soldiers told off to watch the sick and wounded could not watch her boy as she could. So she went to the doctor, and said:

"Would you let me take care of my boy?"

The doctor said:

"He has just gone to sleep, and if you go to him the surprise will be so great it may be dangerous to him. He is in a very critical state. I will break the news to him gradually."

"But," said the mother, "he may never wake up, I should so dearly like to see him."

O how she longed to see him. Finally the doctor said:

"Well, you can see him, but if you wake him up and he dies, it will be your fault."

"I will not wake him up," she said, "if I may only go by his dying cot and see him."

She went by the side of the cot. Her eyes had longed to see him, and as she gazed upon him she could not keep her hand off that pallid forehead, and she laid it gently there. There was love and sympathy in her touch, and the moment the slumbering boy felt it he said: "O! mother have you come?"

He knew there was sympathy and affection in the touch of that hand. And if you, O sinner, will but let Jesus reach out his hand, and touch your heart, you too will find there is sympathy and love in the Saviour's touch.—Exchange.

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