

He Knoweth Best.

BY MARIE V. DAVENPORT.

It is well; God knoweth best,
I will bide His just behest;
Whate'er I do, where'er I go,
He is with me. This I know
By the whisperings I have heard,
By the assurance of His Word,
By the quiet in my breast,
I am glad! He knoweth best!

At the altar or the tomb,
In the sunshine or the gloom;
When my soul is filled with joy,
When this life seems all alloy,
When I sigh for hopes deferred,
I find comfort in His Word;
And my soul knows wondrous rest.
God is good; he knoweth best.

Do you envy me my trust?
It is yours, for God is just;
If you only bid Him stay
He will never go away,
But will shine upon your path
With the brightness that he bath
From the Father. As you roam
With His love, He'll guide you home.

Home! O blest Eternal Joy!
Where the truth has no alloy;
Where the conflict and the strife
On this battle field of life,
Will be shown in perfect light
To declare His power and might.
Lord, we praise Thee, Three in One,
Grant to us Thy glad "Well done."

Pella, Iowa, 1887.

Aimless People.

BY L. R. DE WOLF.

A great many people go on through life without any definite aim. They float with the tide, do the thing that presents itself to be done then, and wait, Micawber fashion, "for something to turn up" when nothing is at hand that avails to help them on in life. These hand-to-mouth people cannot set themselves to work, because they had no definite plan when they started in the early years of manhood. They have lost the power that with early culture would have secured to them homes free from rent and a competence. How sad it is to see a man of mechanical ability doing little odd jobs when, if he had been willing to apply himself under a skillful workman, he might have rivalled him in quality of work. What a man is as a business man is often characteristic of him in spiritual work. If he is thorough, reliable, straightforward in things of this life, it will so help to mould his character that we may expect, and with good reason too, that he may be relied upon for efficient work for the Great Master if he has enlisted under the banner of the cross.

I will recall an incident that deeply impressed me in my native town during a revival season. Several had risen for prayers, the service had been long, and the time for closing the meeting drew near. The pastor asked some brother to offer prayer with special reference to those who had solicited it. The elder deacon, a slow but good man, knelt down and began thus: "O Lord, thou art an incomprehensible being! Thou art from everlasting to everlasting," etc., going on from ten to fifteen minutes just as one might expect from the opening sentences, and then one brief word that simply told the Lord we were all sinners in his sight and needed his help. The amen followed quickly, as if he were glad after all to be through with the duty appointed. But the tender-hearted pastor, who cared for these lambs before him, was not satisfied.

"Will some brother now please pray to the purpose?" he asked. The other deacon present, one of the most decided business men I ever knew, a leading merchant who could be trusted under all circumstances because he never varied from the right course in dealing with any one, dropped suddenly upon his knees and opened the gate of access to heaven by imploring the blessed Saviour to "step right into those waiting hearts that had asked for help and were all ready to receive the blessing of forgiveness." A sob was heard, a sigh somewhere else, others rose to seek for aid; the prayer had reached beyond the few; it had dropped into every seat in the crowded lecture-room and hunted up every heart. Our efficient deacon prayed just as he handed down goods from his shelves to his counter—when you had decided upon them they were removed—or as he weighed out his coffee and sugar, that never fell a grain short and whose paper never gave out before reaching home. This habit of doing things exactly right went through the man; heart, hand and soul were one in principle and action. And it availed with God when he opened his heart in prayer. How delightful it is to see such men in such places, and to know that in early life their aims were high and they kept the standard of excellence ever before their sight until they attained unto it.

I have written this hoping that by it some young man who has never

considered this subject may be led to look closely into this thing and strike boldly out for the best path and keep therein through life, thereby blessing the world by so doing and reaping a golden harvest for himself.

—*Illus. Ch. Weekly.***WAITING FOR WHAT.**

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

In about every congregation we ministers confront a certain number of regular hearers whose faces become as familiar to us as the pews they occupy. They are still unconvinced—although if any message from heaven should announce to them that they will die unconverted it would startle them like an explosion of dynamite. They are waiting, not upon God, but after the fashion of the impotent crowd by the Pool of Bethesda, they are waiting for something to turn up. Let me address a few frank loving words to some such, who are in danger of lingering until the highest purpose of life is lost, and the gate of heaven is closed against them.

One of you, perhaps, is waiting for more conviction of sin. How much do you require in order to accept the new life which Jesus offers? What did that cripple at Bethesda require to know and feel except that he was diseased, helpless, and friendless? If your reason admits that you are a sinner, and that unless Jesus saves you you will perish, this is conviction enough to start with. The Bible furnishes no feeling-meter to determine how badly a guilty soul shall feel before that soul strives to obey God. To tell God that you will never serve Him until He pierces you through with an intense anguish for sin, is an insult; it increases your guilt. No "angel" is going to trouble the stagnant pool of your heart with quickening power while you are disobeying God and insulting the compassionate Saviour. For pungent conviction, you need not wait; if you do, you are cheating your soul with a delusion of the devil.

Your immediate duty is condensed into that pithy sentence which Christ uttered to the cripple in the Bethsadan porch, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk!" You are on a bed of sinful procrastination now, put there by yourself. For all these past years, which have been worse than wasted, you have kept yourself there. Conscience confirms what I say. Every sinner is a sinner because he chooses to be one, and you are no exception. Jesus commands you to forsake your sins (which are diseasing you now, and will damn you hereafter) and follow Him. The instant that you are ready to obey, He gives you strength to obey. He commanded the wretched cripple who had been "in that case" for over thirty years, to stand up! What, on those weak and withered limbs? Certainly; for he could have no others to stand on. And the moment that the man is ready to obey, and makes the honest effort, a new power shoots through the palsied muscles. Christ did not lift him; the man rose up himself on his own limbs; but Christ gave him the power. His part in that healing transaction was faith; Christ's part was restoring grace. Put the two together and you have the history of every true conversion that ever took place, or that is ever likely to occur.

Waiting will not bring conviction, but only increase of guilt. You are under a spell, just where Satan wants to keep you; the first act you honestly perform to please Jesus Christ, breaks the spell. The first sincere prayer you offer for pardon and for divine help, the first sin you refuse because Jesus bids you do so, puts you on your feet. These steps are your steps. A gentleman who had sat under forty years of faithful preaching, came into my study one day and said to me "I have determined to-day to settle the salvation of my soul,"—he did so by giving his heart to God. Many years of happy usefulness have followed that decisive day. But you say "O the Holy Ghost was working upon that man"; so He was, and so has He striven with you a thousand times, and is doing so still. Waiting for the Spirit is only another form of the same delusion. The loving Spirit has waited on you and waited for you to repent and accept Christ, and may not wait much longer. My dear friend, you are fooling with your soul's salvation. When that gentleman of whom I just spoke, quit the mattress of sinful sloth and delay and decided to obey the voice of Christ, his "feet and ankle-bones received strength." He took up his bed and walked—has been walking nobly ever since.

Another person may be waiting for a powerful revival when the waters will be greatly agitated, and then you will be cured of your sins and made whole. A genuine revival signifies

the work of the divine Spirit on many hearts at the same time. But Christ now here bids you wait for other people to move or to be moved. The same truths, the same divine power that moved a whole congregation or community are within your reach at this moment. The question of your soul's salvation is to be settled between you and your Saviour. He led a man out of the crowd once when He was about conferring a blessing upon him. The "inquiry-meeting" you need most is an honest hour with Jesus. Christ is as close to you now, and as thoroughly within your reach as He would be if an hundred sinners around you were all praying for mercy, or a whole assembly were melted under the preaching of a Moody or a Mills. Waiting for a revival is only an excuse for hardening the heart. To revive is to live again; what you need is life from the death of sin in its first experience. You will get it as soon as you obey Christ's command to "rise, take up your bed and walk."

It is of no matter to any of you who are lying on the mattress of delay, that some other people have been led to Christ by a "powerful sermon," or a "special providence," or by any particular agency. No one else is a model, and nobody's particular experience is a mould for you to shape your conversion in. The lesson of that scene at Bethesda, yes, and of every true conversion that ever happened, is to obey Jesus. Waiting is disobedience. Waiting increases the difficulty and decreases the probability of your spiritual cure. Death is moving towards you, and will not wait for you one minute to do what Jesus bids you do at once. No pastor, no friend, no revival, no sermon, no inquiry-meeting can save you. Jesus can. Whatever He directs you to do as He speaks to your conscience, do it. Now is the accepted time; take up your bed and walk!

WHAT CAN I DO?

1. You can be a Christian. As the sun transfigures a drop of dew by the reflections of his own glorious image, so, if you but hold still in faith, Jesus will shine in and through you, making the weak, worthless, perishing man you are now, a medium of his own matchless grace. A steady life for Christ is a means of usefulness incalculably effective.

2. You can pray for others. There may be little apparent connection between fervent prayer for another and his spiritual improvement, but there is such a connection, and it is vital. Daily prayer for others is daily service which the Master will ultimately reward.

3. You can win the love of others. Love is a cable between souls through which mighty influences flow. We transfer to some extent the good that is in us, to those who love us. All humility, gentleness, patience, kindness, and helpfulness, beget love in those who witness these graces.

4. You can speak to others. A prudent word spoken in love has often proved a seed of life. A good woman once addressed a word of admonition to a man in her employ. Another man simply overheard her remarks, and was led by them to Christ. Let the lips open for the utterance of Jesus' name, and for a plea in his behalf.

5. You can visit others. Little attentions prepare people to receive our practical counsels. They reason: "If he cares enough to come, he must have some interest in me. If he has interest in me, I owe attention to his words." Visits to the poor, neglected, indifferent, worldly, afflicted, ignorant, may often be sanctified by their good, even though the subject of religion is not specifically mentioned.

6. You can put good reading into the hands of people who need it. The Sunday-school book, the religious books in your own library, a little tract or leaflet, may be put in the way of somebody every day. The right book in your spare bed-room, or handed to a friend about starting on a journey or forwarded by mail, may do wonders. A ticket-agent in a railroad depot used to give away fifty dollars' worth of tracts every year. A tract went with every ticket sold. More than twenty persons wrote to him, acknowledging that the tracts he had thus given them had been blessed to their conversion.

7. You can reach people with gospel influences, who from sickness or suffering are most susceptible to them. There is a gentleman in Paris who watches the obituary notices in the morning papers, and sends to the bereaved, little tracts adapted to their situation. A visit to the poorhouse and the jail may often be blessed to the good of their inmates. Oh, how many such opportunities for usefulness are neglected by us! There, too, are the sick, who lie for days weary, discouraged, and often friendless. How full of cheer a daily call, with the reading of God's word, a prayer, and a

cordial chat about life and its experiences, death and the new life!

8. You can invite and persuade people to attend God's house—the preaching service, the Sunday-school, and the social meetings.

9. You can enlist others in work for the Master. Here are church-members who should be at work. Here are worldlings who should be awakened to God's claim upon all men for service. A word, a plea, often repeated, ever urgent, may be the means of awakening them to a sense of duty.

10. You can give. Five cents a day is something in ten years, spent in benevolence. Who can not give five cents a day?

But what we all want, most of all, is the "ready mind," that our services may be "not by constraint, but willingly." Good Lord, give thy servants, willing, loving hearts, to toil with fidelity and delight for thee.—*Am. Tract Society Tract.*

Evils of Indecision.

One of these lies in the self-deception which it fosters. It is apparently holding itself in suspense, while really it is already on one side. An English authoress has said: "Men often sin, not so much because they choose, as because they don't choose. The actions which, on looking back upon our lives, we see most reason to deplore, are those in which, instead of manfully facing the conflicting claims of duty and inclination or interest, we have suffered ourselves to pause in indecision, thinking that we were standing still, while in point of fact, the current of evil, so much stronger always than that of good, was bearing us to a point from which there was no retreat." Thus it is also, alas! too often with the undecided man and his salvation. He imagines that no harm can come of mere indecision, while, in fact, the force, fashion, or interest, or inclination is bearing him away all the while, and when he awakens to the danger, he may be too late to secure his deliverance.

Another of these evils is the misery attendant on this state of mind. We often say that "anything is better than suspense," and if a doubter on religious matters is honest, he must be the most unhappy of men, because of the immense importance to him of the matters in question. But just in proportion to the anguish of his doubt will be the joy that springs out of his decision, provided he decides rightly. When the happy discoverer found the treasure in the field, he did not whimper over the price, but for very joy went and sold all that he had, and bought it. So when the doubter comes to faith in Christ, his happiness outweighs all sense or thought of self-denial in the giving up of everything for his Lord.

Remember, too, that indecision puts an arrest on activity. Those who have done the most good in the world have always possessed positive convictions on which they earnestly acted. But without decision a man is destitute of backbone. His character is molluscous and invertebrate. Contrast Moses with Baalam, Paul with Judas; Luther with Erasmus. Indecision is the paralysis of usefulness. It may make good critics, but it makes poor builders. What drunkard has it reformed? What thief has it transformed? What Five Points mission has it carried out? If, therefore, a man wishes to help on those movements which are doing most to bless and benefit mankind, he must get to positive convictions, and seek courageously to act them out. Such a one will be a man for the times; and in his own sphere and place will be another Elijah for the doing of whatever reformation work God may require at his hand. But the hesitator between two opinions will never be or do anything remarkable until he takes a stand on something; and the great thing for him is that he take his stand upon the right, the true, the good, as these are incarnated in Christ.—*W. M. Taylor, D. D., in S. S. Times.*

About Prayer-Meetings.

That prayer-meetings are a failure, or next to a failure, in many churches having a considerable membership is a noteworthy though humiliating fact. Of a church we hear it said sometimes, "They can't sustain a prayer-meeting," or, "The prayer-meeting has little interest, and has very small attendance." What is the matter? All churches do not fall in these respects, and we do not believe there is any good reason for shamefully small or profitless prayer-meetings, any more than there is for poor sermons, poor Sunday-school teaching, or anything else poor that ought to be good.

The truth is, good prayer-meetings draw—they are an attraction. There is something about them that enlists the heart, something suggestive and practical, something so applicable to

the every-day-life and its experiences that men will attend them because of their supreme helpfulness. The secret in sustaining a prayer-meeting in a church, then, is not to be found so much in any one thing as in its being a real prayer-meeting full of genuine heart warmth and power.

Such a meeting will be free from constraint and cold formality, and those taking part in it will be full of spiritual tenderness. In such a meeting hearts will melt and flow together, the emotions will be deep and sympathetic, and joy and peace will richly abound. Another speaking of the element which enters into the successful prayer-meeting, very justly says: "Prayer-meeting power is mainly heart-power. People do not want to hear a man talk religion merely as a conception which he believes, but as an experience which he feels. Prayer meeting talk and singing and praying must flow from an experience—must come from the heart. The spirit must make us tender—tender in thought, tender in words, tender in manner. A merely intellectual prayer-meeting is a spiritual farce."—*Telescope.*

Random Readings.

Life is a short day, but it is a working day.—*Hannah More.*

I find the doing of the will of God leaves me no time for disputing about his plans.

Take the hours of reflection or recreation after business, and never before it.—*Sir Walter Scott.*

The man to whom virtue is but the ornament of character, something over and above, not essential to it, is not yet a man.—*Marquis of Lonsdale.*

He that knows himself knows others; and he that is ignorant of himself cannot write a very perfect lecture on other men's heads.—*Colton.*

Write it on your heart that every day is the best in the year. No man has learned anything rightly until he knows that every day is doomsday.

Receive Christ with all your heart. As there is nothing in Christ that may be refused, so there is nothing in you from which he must be excluded.—*John Flavel.*

Faith, though weak, is still like a glimmering taper if not a glowing torch. But the taper may give light as truly as the torch, though not so brightly.

If there is any one fact, or doctrine, or command, or promise in the Bible which has produced no practical effect on your temper, or heart, or conduct, be assured you do not believe it.—*Payson.*

None have more pride than those who dream that they have none. You may labor against vain-glory till you conceive that you are humble, and the fond conceit of your humility will prove to be pride in full bloom.—*Spurgeon.*

I will govern my life and my thoughts as if the whole world were to see the one, and to read the other; for what does it signify to make anything secret to my neighbors, when to God, the Searcher of our hearts, all our privacies are open?

It is more comforting and enjoyable to notice the beauties of nature, the loveliness of landscapes, and the glories of God's handiwork, as we journey through the world, than it is to select and concentrate our gaze upon any deformities that lurk along the way.

What is time? The shadow on the dial, the striking of the clock, the running of the sand, day and night, summer and winter, months, years, centuries; these are but arbitrary and outward signs, the measure of time, not time itself. Time is the life of the soul.

Be cheerful, do not brood over fond hopes unrealized until a chain, link after link, is fastened on each thought and wound around the heart. Nature intended you to be the fountain-spring of cheerfulness and social life, and not the travelling monument of despair and melancholy.

How often it is difficult to be wisely charitable to do good without multiplying the sources of evil! To give alms is nothing, unless you give thought also. It is written, not "Blessed is he that feedeth the poor," but "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." A little thought and a little kindness are often worth more than a great deal of money.—*Ruskin.*

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better or for worse, as his portion; that, though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given him to till.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

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