

Some Day.

Some day all doubt and mystery Will be made clear. The threatened clouds which now we see Will disappear.

Blue Skies After Storm.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

After several days of storm, the sun breaks out brightly this morning, giving the grass in my yard the vivid hue of the emerald. I am reminded of those "last words of the sweet Psalmist of Israel" in which he speaks of "the tender grass springing out of the earth through clear shining after rain."

Here is a type of our richest spiritual experience. It applies to our earliest experiences at the time of conversion. Over every impenitent soul hangs the dark cloud of God's righteous displeasure; from it descend, like hail, his holy threatenings against sin. Repentance and faith in Christ sweep away this cloud; the face of the pardoning Saviour looks forth like a blue sky after a storm, for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.

What is true in the beginning of the Christian life is often equally true in the subsequent experiences. Rain and sunshine both play their part in enveloping character. It ought to be a great comfort to such of my readers as are under a down-pour of trials to open their Bible and see how it has fared with other children of God.

But we need not go to Bible biographies to discover how God employs stormy providences for the discipline and perfecting of his own people. He knows when we need the drenchings of trial. Every rain-drop has its mission to perform. It goes right down to the roots of the heart and creeps into every crevice. Not one drop of

sorrow, not one tear but has its heaven-ordered purpose. The process is not joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of resignation and purity and strength. Christ's countenance never beams with such brightness and beauty as when it breaks forth after a deluge of sorrow. The only little daughter of a beloved friend of ours was lying at the point of death, seemingly in a quiet sleep. My friend took the physician aside and asked: "Doctor, don't you think she will soon wake up?" "No," replied the doctor, with a sobbing voice—"no, not till she wakes up in Heaven!" Then the great depths of grief were broken up, and the rain-drops of sorrow poured. By and by there came out a bit of blue sky in this promise: "Whom I love I chasten." Then peered out another bright spot: "All things work together for good to them that love God"; and then this one: "Those whom the Father hath given me shall be with me."

This principle has manifold applications. Sometimes a cloud of unjust calumny gathers over a good man's name; lies darken the air, and it pours falsehood forty days and forty nights. But when the shower of slander has spent itself the truth creeps out slowly but surely from behind the clouds of defamation, and the slandered character shines with more luster than ever. The same storm that wrecks a rotten tree only roots the more firmly the sound tree, whose leaves glisten in the subsequent sunshine.

All ye children of God who are under the peltings of poverty, or the down-pour of disappointments, or the blizzards of adversity, "think it not strange as though some strange thing has happened unto you." Millions have had the same experience before you. No storm ever yet drowned a true believer, or washed out the foundation of his hope. The trial of your faith will be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Two thoughts ought to give you courage. One is that our Lord loves to honor and reward unwavering faith. He sends the storm to test you, and then the smile of his sunshine to reward you.

Many years ago, on a day of pouring rain and fog, I ascended Mount Washington by the old bridle-path over the slippery boulders. A weary, disappointed company we were when we reached the "Tiptop" cabin. But presently a mighty wind swept away the banks of mist, the body of the blue heavens stood out in its clearness, and before us was revealed the magnificent landscape stretching away to the Atlantic sea! That scene was a sermon to my soul. It taught me that Faith's stairways are over steep and slippery rocks, often through blinding storms; but God never loses his hold on us, and if we endure to the end he will yet bring us out into the "clear shining after rain."

There was never a night without a day, Or an evening without a morning; And the darkest hour—as the proverb goes—

Is the hour before the dawning. So it's better to hope, tho' the clouds run low, And to keep the eye still lifted; For the clear blue sky will soon peep through, When the thunder-cloud is rifted."

Plainness in the Pulpit.

A man who cannot make things plain is not qualified to fill a pulpit. First of all, let a preacher think out his subject so thoroughly that his ideas shall lie clear and distinct, like crystals, in his own mind; and then let him remember that a "straight line is the shortest distance between two points," and speak accordingly. What right has he to use an involved and tortuous manner when declaring the great things of God—darkening counsel by words without knowledge?

What right has he to come before plain people in the strait-jacket of professional dignity, and talk of "volition" instead of will, "intellectual process" instead of thinking, and "moral obligation" instead of duty and the like, as if the very use of language were, as Talleyrand suggests,

"to conceal one's thoughts?" What right has he to give his hearers the hard stone of metaphysics, when they are dying for the bread of heaven? What right has he to bring forward profound disquisitions and curious speculations, when the command is, "Preach the preaching that I bid thee?" And what right has he to hide that Christ whom he is to make known, amid the flowers of rhetoric, as Verelst in his portrait of James II. virtually hid his Majesty in a profusion of sunflowers and tulips? When the late young preacher, Erskine Hawes, was dying, he said, "I wish to live to preach the Gospel more simply." How many at death's door have felt as he felt?—Dr. H. C. Fish.

Do You Sing At Home?

There is perhaps no pleasanter occupation in the family circle than sacred song. Many a home where there is little of beauty, or ease, or luxury, is made pleasant by "thanksgiving and the voice of melody." If there be joy in the heart and music on the tongue, many rough places in life are smoothed and made plain, many dark spots are brightened and made cheerful.

These families who know nothing of sacred song miss some of the purest pleasures that fall to the lot of mortals. Family prayer is a duty and a privilege, but family praise is none the less so, and there is nothing that binds hearts more closely to the home than those "songs which mother sang;" and old tunes in which the voices of parents and brothers and sisters join, form a bond of union which unites hearts when mountains rise and oceans roll between them. Sometimes the layward son, wandering in a far-off land, hears the song his mother sang, and is charmed by its music to know and serve his mother's God.

Careful and melodious singing in the home fits persons for singing elsewhere, especially if persons are taught to sing correctly, gently and tenderly, and without much instrumental accompaniment. Then the hymns learned by the young linger long in memory, a precious heritage against days of darkness and sorrow.

Let parents set the example of song, and the children will be sure to follow. Take time now and then, and enjoy an evening of sacred song. Let the voice of rejoicing be heard in the tabernacle of the righteous, and prayer and praise ascend to the throne of God. Let each child have his hymn-book, and he will learn to prize it next to the Bible, and will from it gather many precious truths which will go with him to life's latest hour. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God. Let us have more praising and less murmuring, more song and fewer complaints. Instead of fretting because of evil-doers, let us pray; instead of repining at our lot, let us leave our burden at the Cross, "and bear a song away."

"Hast thou no words? Oh think again; Words flow apace when you complain, And fill your fellow-creatures' ears With the sad tale of all your cares."

Gathered by the Way.

"I hope he will give us a simple Gospel sermon this morning," we heard one say as we passed down the street to the Sunday morning service. "Indeed, I hope so," was the reply. "I don't want any nonsense to-day. I do not want to hear what any man thinks. I am hungry for the word of the Lord." We followed the speakers into the church, quite in sympathy with their remarks. And to our great comfort, and theirs, no doubt, we listened to a clear, simple, earnest presentation of Christ's words to Nicodemus: "Ye must be born again."

It had been heard hundreds of times perhaps before, yet never was the fundamental truth of the Gospel fresher or more stimulating.

We know by experience that the change wrought by the Spirit in a human soul was life to that soul. But to hear the truth reiterated by one who felt what he was saying, in the union of the Holy Ghost, was like going back to a familiar spring to drink and be satisfied. Hearts are everywhere to be found in every Sunday morning congregation, thirsty as were those who longed for the "simple word of the Lord." And herein is great encouragement for every faithful preacher of the word, and great incentive to follow St. Paul who said "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord."

A Mighty Myth.

Some time since a woman delivered a lecture in Lancashire against Christianity, in which she declared that the Gospel narrative of the life of Christ is a myth or fable. One of the mill-hands who listened to her obtained leave to ask a question. "The question," said

he, "I want to ask the lady is this: Thirty years ago I was a curse to this town, and everybody shrank from me that had any respect for himself. I often tried to do better, but could not succeed. The teetotalers got hold of me, but I broke the pledge so often that they said it was no use trying me any longer; then the police got hold of me, and I was taken before the magistrates, and they tried; and next I was sent to prison, and the warders tried what they could do, but though they all tried, I was nothing better, but rather worse. Now, you say that Christ is a myth. But when I tried, and the teetotalers, the police, the magistrates, and the warders of the prison, all tried in vain, then Christ took hold of me, touched my heart, and made me a new man. And now I ask, if Christ is a myth, how comes it to pass that the myth is stronger than all these forces put together?" The lady was silent. "Nay, miss," said he, "say what you will, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation."

Keep Still.

We find in one of Dr. Burton's Yale lectures the following advice given to young ministers:

Keep still. When trouble is brewing keep still. When slander is getting on to its legs, keep still. When your feelings are hurt, keep still, till you recover from your excitement at any rate. Things look different through an unagitated eye. In a commotion once I wrote a letter, and sent it, and wished I had not. In my later years I had another commotion and wrote a long letter; but life had rubbed a little sense into me, and I kept that letter in my pocket against the day when I could look it over without agitation and without tears. I was glad I did. Less and less it seemed necessary to send it. I was not sure it would do any hurt, but in my doubtfulness I learned to reticence, and eventually it was destroyed. Time weeps wonders. Wait till you can speak calmly, and then you will not need to speak may be. Silence is the most massive thing conceivable sometimes. It is strength in its very grandeur. It is like a regiment ordered to stand still in the mid-fury of battle. To plunge in were twice as easy. The tongue has unsettled more ministers than small salaries ever did, or lack of ability.

Indebted To Christ.

There are men and women here who would have been dead twenty years ago but for Jesus. They have gone through trial enough to exhaust ten times their physical strength. Their property went, their health went, their families were scattered. God only knows what they suffered. They are an amazement to themselves that they have been able to stand it. They look at their once happy home, surrounded by all comfort. Gone! They think of the time when they used to rise strong in the morning and walk vigorously down the street, and had experienced a health they thought inexhaustible. Gone! Everything gone but Jesus. He has pitied them. His eye has watched them. His omnipotence has defended them. Yes he has been with them. They have gone through disaster, and He was a pillar of fire by night. They have gone across stormy Galilee, but Christ had His foot on the neck of the storm. They felt the waves of trouble coming up around them gradually, and they began to climb into the strong rock of God's defence, and then they sang as they looked over the waters: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in time of trouble; therefore we will not fear though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."—Talmage.

Preach, but Don't scold.

It is the imperative duty of pastors to preach on Christian liberality, systematic beneficence, the duty of "supporting the institutions of the Church," as all our members in a solemn vow have agreed to do. Many persons would certainly contribute more into the Lord's treasury if they were properly instructed on this religious obligation and were clearly shown the demands resting upon them. We have no doubt of this; but we think some pastors make a serious mistake in complaining from their pulpits about any lack of support given themselves. Scolding will seldom increase appreciation and will rarely enforce the obligation of ministerial support, especially in the presence of sinners and the members of other Churches. Candid and free consultations with stewards, who are chosen with reference to qualifications and duties named in our Discipline, will most generally prove the best means upon the pastors towards securing the desired end: necessary

support. This course impresses upon stewards their relation and importance both to the ministry and the Church; it magnifies their office and stimulates the more to care for their pastors.—Arkansas Methodist.

God's Will.—A gentleman visited a deaf and dumb asylum, and having looked upon all the silent inmates, he was requested to ask some of them a question by writing it upon the black-board. He did not know what question to ask, but at last he ventured to write this inquiry in chalk upon the board: "Why did God make you deaf and dumb, and make me so that I could hear and speak?"

The eyes of the silent ones were filled with tears; it was a great mystery. Their cleverness made no answer, but their piety made eloquent reply. One of the little fellows went up to the board, and taking the chalk, wrote under the question this answer: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."—The Worker.

RANDOM READINGS.

—No view of life can be a right one which is not a joyous one.

—To-day is a treasure-house of golden opportunities; but no key will open it to-morrow.

—If religion has done nothing for your temper, it has done nothing for your soul.—Clayton.

—When Christ abides in a human heart he is in it as an immortal hope.—President Culross.

—Always hold fast to love. We win by tenderness; and forgiveness.—F. W. Robertson.

—You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one.—Froude.

—The most delicate, the most sensible of all pleasures consists in promoting the pleasures of others.—La Bruyere.

—The soul is the life of the body. Faith is the life of the soul. Christ is the life of the soul. Christ is the life of faith.

—If we would bring holy life to Christ, we must mind our fireside duties as well as the duties of the sanctuary.—Spurgeon.

—Remember one thing really valuable in life and that is good religious character, and all may have it if they will.

—Just in proportion as a church or an individual leans hard upon God and depends implicitly upon the Holy Spirit, does it or he come close to the secret of power.

—The beatitudes of the sermon on the mount constitute a substantial chain, of which mercy is the swivel link connecting the human heart with the divine heart, with which it moves in unison.

—Believe me when I tell you that thirt of time will repay you in after life with a usury of profit beyond your most sanguine dreams, and that the waste of it will make you dwindle alike in intellectual and moral stature beyond your darkest reckonings.—Wm. E. Gladstone.

—Brother, do not so misrepresent the largeness and freedom of Christianity as to make it appear to young disciples something cheerless and unlovely; do not teach that "separation from the world" includes the renunciation of that which is best of God's bounteous gifts to men.

—True zeal is modest and retiring; it is not like the senseless sunflower, which spreads its gaudy petals to the light of heaven, and turns its face to the orb of day, as if determined to be seen; but, like the modest violet, it hides itself in the bank, and sends forth its fragrance from its deep retirement.—J. A. James.

Upon my word I think truth is the hardest missile one can be pelted with.—George Elliot.

The New Testament is latent in the Old; the Old is patent in the New.—Augustine.

A man lives by believing something, not by debating and arguing about things.—Carlyle.

Life, if we look at it in Christ, is transfigured; death, if we look at it in Christ, is conquered.—Canon Westcott.

True friends visit us in prosperity only when invited, but in adversity they come without invitation.—Theophrastus.

Let us help the fallen still, though they never pay us; and let us lend without exacting the usury of gratitude.—Thackeray.

I have lived long enough to know what I did not at one time believe—that no society can be upheld in happiness and honor without the sentiment of religion.—Laplace.



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