

## Marah.

BY ANNA D. WALKER.

"The hand of the Lord is gone out against me."—RUTH i. 13.

The hand of God against thee? No; O, say not, Christian, this is so. To stay thy doubts when winds are rough, The past survey; 'tis sure enough. 'Tis He who led thee all along, His kindness gleams in all thy way; The hand of God against thee? No; y.

Because the hour is dark with gloom Is that fair reason to assume That He in anger turns away From thee He loved but yesterday? The treasures thou mayst not obtain Doth He withhold for greater gain; His love is just as strong in woe As when the fount of joy doth flow.

If thou couldst only understand, Against thee never is His hand; The winds and storms, He gives them force To drive thee homeward in their course; If sun and mildness blend all day, They might becalm thee on thy way; Thy vessel tossed upon the tide, Has still a pilot, port, and guide.

His chastisements are sure no sign That He's forgot His love divine; Thine eyes with sorrow He makes dim, That thou mayst grope thy way to Him. In all His dealings thou mayst trace His love, His mercy, and His grace; If thou canst only understand, Against thee never is His hand.

## Unused Spiritual Power in the Church.

That the church is an instrument of power for the world's evangelization, results directly from its being the dwelling-place of the Divine Presence—the "habitation of God through the Spirit." The Apostles were to remain in Jerusalem till the power should come upon them from on high through the Spirit who had been promised. In the Spirit's endowment and replenishment they would find their mightiest equipment for their work. With the twofold intercession of Christ upon the throne and the Holy Spirit within them engaged on their behalf they would go forth to "turn the world upside down"—would do even greater works than Christ had done; far greater than the literal raising of the dead and the literal casting out of devils must be regarded the wonderful renewal and transformation of human society through the gospel as preached by Christ's sent servants. If Christians are not strong to do the bidding of their Lord, it can be from no curtailment to them of the means of power, for its entire resources have been put within their reach. With "all the fulness of God" before them from which to draw, there is no necessity of their having only the stature of dwarfs and being correspondingly weak. God's doing for his people "exceedingly abundantly above all that they ask or think," is according to the power that worketh in them.

But this is rather the divine side of the question—it has a human side also, which should not be overlooked. It is not enough that the power that has been lodged in the bosom of the church should be latent and dormant there; it should ever express itself in the visible and active endeavors of its individual members. In the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom it is as much the divine intention that the power should operate through human instrumentality, as that it should operate at all. The terrestrial effort must ever be joined to the celestial blessing—neither of them is sufficient alone. Christ calls men into the kingdom of his grace that he may employ them. He saves them that instrumentally they may save others.

And yet many persons seem to imagine that the whole end of the gospel dispensation has been answered so far as they are concerned when they have accepted Christ for themselves and "joined the church." Their idea of the Christian life and of response to Christian obligation is principally summed up in this act. To get on board the gospel ship and have a pleasant sail to glory is the main thing with them; the working of the ship and the getting of others on board concern them but little.

The time has surely come for the explosion of the idea so widely prevalent hitherto, that preaching and praying and active evangelistic effort in the church should be remitted principally to the minister and deacons. No idea has worked more disastrously to the cause of true religion. What could be expected of an army whose rank and file, on meeting the enemy, should throw down their arms, leaving the fighting to be done by the officers alone?

This overlooking of the lay element in the church, this permitting it to lie unused and dormant, is contradictory to the very aim and purpose of the church in its original constitution. The sending forth of the seventy, as well as the twelve, is plainly indicative of the Master's purpose to use the lay element as well as the clerical in the promotion of his Kingdom. The his-

tory of the church furnishes abundant proof of the disastrous consequences to the cause of Christianity of spiritual rulers virtually resolving themselves into the church and taking all spiritual duties into their own hands.

How many churches to-day are suffering spiritual decadence and death from the non-employment of the means of spiritual growth and conquest which are contained within themselves. What an improved state of things would ensue if each member would find the work to which he is adapted—usually lying right before him—and do it. What new spiritual vigor has come into many a Christian's soul, and how enlarged his spiritual joy, as he has learned to open his mouth in witnessing for Christ, and in commending him to others. There is a vast amount of latent power in the church which, if duly elicited and used, would go far to give new life to all its benevolent activities, and would multiply its spiritual conquests possibly a hundred fold.—*Can. Baptist.*

## The Pastor and the Boys.

No people in the parish are more worthy of a pastor's special attention than the boys, all the boys, not only the most decorous and promising boys, but also the mischievous and turbulent and vagrant boys. The forces bound up in a real whirlwind of a boy may be trained to do the work of a gloriously energetic manhood.

When the pastor makes his regular rounds of calls, he seldom sees the boys. They are at school, or in the streets, at the base-ball game, roaming the fields or woods, "going in swimming," sailing toy boats or manning real ones. The pastor should know their haunts, and should seek them in them, not to preach them sermons then and there, but to sympathize with all their innocent pastime and let them know that he was altogether a boy himself once and is something of a boy still. "Do you know Dr.?" said a mother to a fifteen-year-old son shortly after the advent of a new pastor. "Yes," said the boy, "he's going fishing with me some day." That mother wept happy tears that night, for her boy had dropped out of the weekly prayer-meeting a year or two before, and had only attended church to please her. His new pastor had already won his heart, and he was not willing to miss one of his sermons.

And sermons should be fitted to interest the boys. On the whole as a class they are the best critics in the congregation; that is to say, the most suggestive and helpful to the preacher if he notes the effects of his sermon on them. If he can keep all the boys interested, no one in the congregation will deem the sermon dull. To seize and hold the attention of the boys, the sermon should be clear, pointed, well illustrated, true to human nature, and flaming with earnestness. The analogies of nature, the facts of history, the lofty ideals of the Gospel, are all attractive to the boys, if they are set forth in a manner that is not mawkish but manly.

The ordinary pastoral term covers the critical period in the life of many of the boys of one's parish. The small boy becomes a tall boy in three years, and a young man in five. The greatest losses sustained by Christian churches are from lack of holding and securing influence over the boys and young men. The pastor that can win and hold the boys is the one that is most needed to-day. The girls are not less valuable to the churches, but they are comparatively easily held; they are not so apt to go astray; they are more sheltered; to the average minister they are, perhaps, more interesting. It is natural to raise one's hat and speak winning words to a sweet miss of fourteen. Her boisterous, uncouth, blundering brother a year older or a year younger does not always command such spontaneous homage and interest; but he is equally worthy of it; a frank and friendly intimacy with him will be as good for the minister as it is for the boy. The methods of the ministry are often too feminine; that is, they are too much addressed to the female mind.

The church of the future will save the boys. There will not be the disparity of number between the sexes that there now is. In a revival meeting in the main auditorium of one of our most representative churches last winter, the altar was filled from end to end with young men. One of the most prominent official members said he had not seen the like in all his years of acquaintance with church work. But he was familiar, and so are we all, with the sight of altars crowded with women and girls. The boys will come if they are properly respected and looked after. The church needs them. The good girls ought to have religious husbands. The too feminine piety of our churches will become more vigorous when ministers do more pastoral work among

the men and boys, and have them chiefly in mind when they are making their sermons. "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary." They should have equal places there.—*Z. Herald.*

## Fault-Finding.

BY ONE WHO IS FOUND FAULT WITH EVERY DAY.

Every body knows that it is an easy matter to find fault with things and persons. But to remedy the defects pointed out is quite another matter. When a child or an adult makes a mistake, it is very easy to laugh at him, or to make some sharp, cutting remark on the short-coming, but to wisely, tenderly correct him requires no little skill and grace. The good to be aimed at, we believe, is to impress clearly and distinctly on the mind of the short-comer the reason and extent of the error, without leaving any unkind or harsh feeling to rankle in his heart.

How heartily and sincerely we love those who with patience and love point out to us the better way. We may not at the time appreciate the extent of their kindness, but the loving word and kind action warm our heart at once and make good ground for corrections to grow in.

We know a young girl who, like many of her species, had many things to learn. She was a sincere Christian, and heartily desired to do everything in the best way possible. She had an elderly lady friend who felt called upon to severely criticize and comment on every little action of bad form, on her ignorance and idiosyncrasies. The young girl loved her elderly friend dearly, and was very anxious to improve, so she received all her criticism with meekness, but the constant drawing of her attention to mere trifling mistakes that time and observation would have corrected made her so conscious of her errors that she lost all ease of manner, and though years have passed the memory of those cutting comments still give pain and embarrassment.

A child that is constantly nagged and snapped at, or laughed at, loses courage and confidence to even try. It is well when probing a wound not to make it any larger than it need be, and not to lope off the whole member by way of cure. Knowledge of an error is the first step toward remedying it. Patient, persevering endeavor to change the habit of mind that leads to indulgence in error is necessary. Plants do not attain their full growth and maturity in a single day.

The best way to correct a person is to build up and encourage his love for the perfect and noble and true. Then all the rest will follow in time. Another good way of helping others to overcome their faults is to talk to God about them a great deal more than to the persons themselves. This method never fails of having good fruit.

## The Influence of a Good Example.

More than half a century ago a young lad, in England, was put apprentice to an ordinary trade. There was nothing remarkable about him, with perhaps one exception—that he learned to be a serious and thoughtful lad, as it was known he was the child of pious parents. But alas! in his case, as in that of many others, his early apparent goodness soon passed away. Having to sleep in a room with other apprentices, all of whom were thoughtless or reckless, on retiring to rest he was ashamed to be seen praying as he had been accustomed to do, and so, from fear of his wicked companions, he hurried to bed without bending his knee in supplication. Again and again this was done, till his regard for his former habit got less and less, and by-and-by he gave it up altogether, and seemed, like his companion apprentices, as if he had never known or done better.

After a time, however, another apprentice came and, he also slept in the same room. Accustomed as he was to pray, he quietly knelt to offer prayer to God as he retired to rest. This was seen by the other with deep emotion, conscience rebuking him for his want of Christian firmness, and urgently pressing him to be faithful to his known but neglected duty. Shame to pray in the presence of his fellow-apprentices had been the first step in his downward course. And now the example of the other had brought him to reflection, and led him with firmer purpose than ever, to consecrate himself to the service of Christ.

From this time his course was changed; and in after life he became an honest and most useful minister of the Gospel, the distinguished and beloved John Angel James, of Birmingham, England, who after a life of great usefulness, being the means of turning many to righteousness, died in the faith, and passed to his rest in heaven.

Who can estimate the power of example, whether for good or evil? What evil may not be done by one

evil example? What good may not result from one act of Christian decision? Who is there that cannot be useful to others by himself being and doing right? "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven!"

## Affected Piety.

Some people can not, or at any rate do not, talk about religious subjects except with the use of a special phraseology and a peculiar tone of voice, neither of which they adopt under other circumstances. We know some who never walk up the aisle to their pews in a church except with body bent, head dropped between the shoulders and slightly bowed, and a tetering, tip-toeing sort of gait, as if a natural, upright carriage were an unhallowed thing. These peculiarities usually, if not always, are due to a reverent spirit, but are the illustrations of a mistake as to what is essential to the exhibition of such a spirit. In most instances they do harm to others, and sometimes they react mischievously upon those in whom they appear.

Nothing is more important, as an element of influential personal piety than naturalness. When one who has become a professor of religion is perceived by his acquaintances to be stiff and formal in speech, they distrust him a little. Words or phrases in regard to religious subjects which are not natural to him, and which evidently do not express any real feeling or actual experience of his own, inevitably have a parrot-like, sing-song effect, which repels, because it suggests a doubt of their sincerity. Whatever causes us to seem artificial robs us of power over others. Even if it represent an actual and proper frame of mind, and is effected only in appearance, it does no good; indeed, it does positive harm.

Naturalness, therefore, straightforward simplicity, must be preserved as much as possible. The danger of losing this lies largely in the fact that young Christians often suppose that they are expected to speak and act like those who are much older, and their elders often treat them as if this were desirable. But it is not. Boys and girls, young men and women, on entering the service of Jesus Christ, are to remain young people, and should not be encouraged to put on the manners of greater age. The chief thing for them to aim at is to be consecrated young people, to think and talk and behave with the same unaffected naturalness as ever, but with a holy purpose and spirit which may sweeten and ennoble their whole conduct and influence. They should not even think much about being natural; for studied naturalness is almost impossible. We ought to think little about ourselves, and much about the Lord Jesus Christ. When our attention is fixed on him, we are the simple, natural and useful disciples that we ought to be.—*Congregationalist.*

## What She Could do.

A poor crippled woman, living in a tiny room on the ground-floor of a dingy house, could only move on her hands and knees and had not stood upright for fifteen years. A lady visiting the sufferer was pitying her for her utter inability to do anything in the world. While she spoke two merry little children clattered into the room and seated themselves by the scrap of fire. "Do these little children belong to you?" asked the lady. "No, ma'am," was the reply, "they are my neighbor's children; she's just a poor washer-woman, and I look after her little ones to set her free to get a job of work. I can do just that, you see; thank the Lord!"—*Southern Churchman.*

## Bought with His Blood.

Some Africans are terribly blood-thirsty and cruel. A chief one day ordered a slave to be killed for a very small offense. An Englishman who overheard the order at once went to the chief and offered him many costly things if only he would spare the poor man's life. But the chief turned to him and said, "I don't want ivory or slaves or gold; I can go against yonder tribe and capture their slaves and their villages. I want no favors from the white man. All I want is blood." Then he ordered one of his men to pull his bowstring, and discharge an arrow at the heart of the poor slave. The Englishman instinctively threw himself in front and held up his arm, and the next moment the arrow was quivering in the white man's flesh. The black men were astonished. Then the Englishman pulled the arrow from his arm, he said to the chief: "Here is blood; I give my blood for this poor slave, and I claim his life." The chief had never seen such love before, and he was completely overcome by it. He gave the slave to the white man, saying, "Yes, white man,

you have bought him with your blood, and he shall be yours." In a moment the poor slave threw himself at the feet of his deliverer, and with tears flowing down his face, exclaimed, "O, white man, you have bought me with your blood; I will be your slave forever!" The Englishman could never make him take his freedom. Wherever he went the slave was beside him, and no drudgery was too hard, no task too hopeless for the grateful slave to do for his deliverer. If the heart of a poor heathen can thus be won by the precious blood of Christ, give our whole lives also to his service!—*Friend of Missions.*

## Multiplied Exceedingly.

A grain of mustard seed! Can anything be smaller? Well, but when Count Zinzendorf was a boy at school, he founded among his school-fellows a little guild which he called the "Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed," and thereafter that seedling grew into the great tree of the Moravian Brotherhood, whose boughs were a blessing to the world. The widow's mite! When they laughed at St. Theresa when she wanted to build a great orphanage, and had but three shillings to begin with, she answered: "With three shillings Theresa can do nothing; but with God and her three shillings there is nothing that Theresa can not do." Do not let us imagine, then, that we are too poor, or too stupid, or too ignorant to do any real good in the world wherein God has placed us. Is there greater work in this day than the work of education? Would you have thought that the chief impulse of that work, whereupon we now annually spend so many millions of taxation, was given by a poor, illiterate Plymouth cobbler—John Pounds? Has there been a nobler work of mercy in modern days than the purification of prisons? Yet that was done by one whom a great modern writer sneeringly patronized as "the dull, good man, John Howard." Is there a grander, nobler enterprise than missions? The mission of England to India was started by a humble, itinerant shoemaker—William Carey. These men brought to Christ their humble effort, their barley loaves, and in his hand, and under his blessing, they multiplied exceedingly.—*Archdeacon Farrar.*

## Mr. Spurgeon on Dying.

Mr. Spurgeon preached the other Sunday on "Crossing the Jordan as an Emblem of the Christian's Death." He said:—Do not begin saying to yourself, "What shall I do in sickness?" You will be guided by Him who bore our sorrows and infirmities. "But what shall I do when the pulse is faint and low, and the death sweat beads the brow? He will show what to do, for he also died. He knows what faintness, pain, thirst, and fever mean, for He has felt the same. In death, grace will be magnified to the uttermost. Some children of God are always delighted at the idea that Christ may come, and that they shall never die. I would be delighted if the Lord would come at once; but as to dying or not dying I do not care a jot. I think that of the two, it might be preferable to die, because those who die will have a kind of fellowship with Christ in His death which will not be experienced by those who never sleep in the tomb. They that are alive and remain to His coming will miss the privilege of actually passing through the tomb as the Saviour did, though even they must be changed. Brethren, we traverse a road which has known the feet of the Crucified. Where should the dying members rest but with their dying Head? Why should I fear to sleep where Jesus went to bed? Did he not leave the sheets behind? He laid the napkin by itself that mourners might wipe their eyes; but He laid the grave clothes by themselves, that we might find in the grave a bed well furnished for our slumber. Oh, yes, you shall have divine direction when the darkness gathers about you!

HAD READ IT.—On one occasion a clergyman was traveling in a stage-coach in company with a noisy talker who persisted in thrusting upon his fellow-passengers the fact that he did not believe in the Bible. In particular, he was severe on the writer who had alleged that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and looked on while he wiped out the heathen. The clergyman had been measuring up his companion, and at this point he spoke out: "Did you ever read the further explanation of that miracle given in the Book of Zorobabel?" he inquired. "Yes, I have," snapped the learned infidel; "and that doesn't throw any light upon it either." A general roar of laughter which followed this confession of ignorance ended this controversy, and bottled up the agnostic.

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