

A Pastor's Aspiration.

If when the darkness ushers in the night,
And buries in forgetfulness the light
With shadows deep;
If, in that silent hour of peace and rest,
I, too, like a tired bird, seeking its nest,
Lie down to sleep;

And V., unlike the bird, who with gay wing,
Wakes in the morn its glad notes to sing,

For darkness past—
If I, with folded arms and head bowed low,
Sleep on (while all things round me stir and glow)

In slumbers fast;

Friends will come round me, whispering
"He is dead;
Silent the body, and the spirit fled;
Gone home; good-bye."
O, in that hour shall any gather near,
Too full for words but with a silent tear,
Or stifled sigh;

Shall stoop and murmur o'er the form laid low:
"To him the highest hope of life I owe,
My guide, my friend;
He taught to hate the evil, love the right,
He led the way to purer realms of light,
Man's noblest end."

Welcome, ye victors, to your crowns of gold
Or a plain laurel wreath; with praise untold,
Let the air ring.
All that I ask the simpler, sweeter thought,
Of some lone wanderer lost, but homeward brought
To life and King.

Honors in arms or science strew your way,
Empires and men but live their own brief day.

I ask just this:
That when all nature dies, and like a scroll
Earth vanishes, O may some rescued soul
Greet me in bliss.

—W. B.

Only One.

"I don't believe I'll go to prayer-meeting to-night."

Mr. Martin said it rather doggedly, as if expecting protest against his decision, and fully prepared to meet it.

"Seems to me—I would if 'twas me," said Mrs. Martin, with a little hesitation. "So few go."

"That's just it. So few go that there's no life about the thing. Mr. Dent feels discouraged because it's so, and that makes him dull, I reckon. Everything is dull."

"It's a bad night," said Mrs. Martin.

"Dreadful. Nobody'll be there but those that feel as though they must be."

"Then all the more those ought to go that can," said Mrs. Martin, with a feeble little laugh. "I'd go if I could," she added, with a rueful glance at her sprained foot.

"Of course you would," he said, peevishly. "I'll say that for 'em—women'll go when men won't. But that makes it all the duller. Nobody to keep things moving."

Mrs. Martin gave her chair a jerk which turned it so that she could get a view of the deepening shade outside.

"I sometimes wonder," she began hesitatingly, "why Mr. Dent holds meetings at all such bad nights."

"So do I. He oughtn't to. Ought not to expect folks'll come out. Fact is, I wonder he doesn't give up having prayer meeting at all."

"O, John!" she said in a scandalized tone.

"I do," he answered stoutly. "I don't see any good in such dead affairs, where folks have lost all their interest."

The subject dropped with the summons of tea. Mr. Martin was sober during the meal. His wife hoped it might be owing to the striving of conscience against his forsaking his assembling together. But this was not the case. He was really debating with himself the question whether or not to give up prayer meetings altogether.

After tea he settled himself to his newspaper. But he was restless, several times going for a look out of the window. The February night was raw. A slight fall of snow over a coating of ice, brought by a sharp frost after rain, made the footing precarious.

"Wind's rising," he remarked. "Awful mean night to be out."

"Did you ever wonder, Maria," he resumed, on the occasion of his next journey to the window, "whether there'd be a prayer meeting held and nobody come to it—not a single soul?"

"Dear me—no, I never did," said Mrs. Martin in a depressed tone. "Do you think such a thing ever happened? Wouldn't it be dreadful?"

"Dreadful for you?" said Mr. Martin, with a short laugh. "For the parson or the folks?"

"Well, for both, I guess. Dreadful for the minister, but worse—yes, a good deal worse, for the folks who ought to have been there and weren't."

Mr. Martin again took up his paper. At the quarter after seven his wife turned her head inquiringly towards him, but he was absorbed in attention to the telegraphic

columns, holding his head stiffly in one position.

Half past seven—five minutes later. The wind howled mournfully about the house.

"Wheat lower. Great storms on the coast. I should say," with a glance towards the window, "that if there's any common sense going to night, there'll be no prayer meeting. Hear that wind! Who'd think of going out such a night as this?"

Well! Well! half angrily, "if there isn't a light in the lecture room!"

"I thought Mr. Dent wouldn't give up to it," ventured Mrs. Martin meekly.

"Some folks don't know when it's the proper time to give up."

Mr. Martin resumed his seat, and read aloud a long account of a burglary in the next town. Neither reader or listener could have told a word of it after he had finished. Again he strolled to the window.

"Not a track on our side of the street. Slim meeting, I guess," spitefully. Then with a start and total change of voice: "Maria—I say! That man's got a light in the window."

"What man?" she asked.

"What man? I irritably, what man should I mean but parson Dent? Yes, he's set a light in the window."

"Meaning to let folks know he's there," said Mrs. Martin, cheerfully. "Well, that's a little more'n I can stand."

It would have been difficult for Mr. Martin to tell, if asked, by whom he felt abused as he stalked across the room to a closet containing his overcoat and rubber shoes. But abused he did feel as he opened the door, letting in a blast of cutting wind, and stepped out on the sidewalk.

Through the yielding snow, over the icy foundation, he floundered and stumbled. There was no trouble now in determining against whom he had a grievance. All three—the minister, who unreasonably insisted on holding a prayer meeting on such a night, his wife, who, without really saying so, had conveyed so distinctly her opinion that he was under obligation to go to it; and himself, meekly yielding to the combined pressure.

"I'm going to have it distinctly understood, after this," he growled to himself, as his feet slipped to the left, giving him a bare chance of saving himself by a grasp on the fence at his right, "that I'm not one of the men who can be depended upon to be always at prayer meeting."

The outside door was slightly ajar, and being late he entered with noiseless footsteps. At first he heard no sound except the rush of the wind outside, and the creaking of the shutters, and the rattle of the sashes always prevailing in the building during a storm. The silence was surprising, for according to Mr. Martin's calculation it must be near the time for the closing of the minister's usual prayer meeting talk.

It was at length broken by the sound of a hymn—in the minister's voice. Mr. Dent did not usually "raise the tunes," the duty being taken by one or other of the women. And as it went on, Mr. Martin could hear no other voice.

"Blest be the tie that binds!"

Mr. Martin was spellbound by the peculiar condition of things. There was something weird in the union of the storm without and the stillness within, broken only by the solitary voice. It was a quivering voice—for Mr. Dent was rather a weakly man as well as a discouraged one—and just now it seemed almost to bear a pathetic wail as it thinly rose and mingled with the voice of the wind.

The singing was short. With the words,

"We share each other's woes,
Our mutual burdens bear!"

the tremulous voice died away. A few moments of such intense silence that outside sounds appeared lost in it, and then the sound of prayer arose.

Mr. Martin ventured near the inner door and applied his eye to a crack in the thin panel.

It was as he had already guessed—the minister was alone.

Here was at length a prayer meeting to which no one else had come.

The impulse to go quietly in, alternating with reluctance to interrupt, held him a listener—rather, a humble, shame-faced sharer in the petition.

He heard the full out-pour of the pastor's heart. Heard while the servant of God, alone with his Maker, laid before him his burdens and trials—his craving, yearning solicitude for the souls committed to his trust.

At first the weakness and discouragement prevailed—the pain of lack of sympathy, the bitterness belonging with fear of unprofitable service. But across came a more triumphant strain—of unwavering, all-grasping faith in the King who has promised to honor the least of those who serve with their hearts, a resting on the pledge that seed sown in tears shall

not lack its time of fruition, though the fulfillment be long delayed.

"Lord, thou art the hearer of prayer, though it is of one alone." The voice sank lower. "I am only one, Lord; there are not even two to plead before thee."

"Parson, parson, there are two." The unguessed participant had opened the door and swift footsteps were at the minister's side. With streaming eyes the men grasped each other's hands.

The prayer meeting lasted for some time longer. And from that night dated a quiet but steady growth of interest in the Church, based upon prayer meeting with such improved attendance, through the persevering energy of Brother Martin, as would have awakened gladness and courage in the heart of any pastor.—Presbyterian.

For Girls.

The following is from a sermon by Rev. A. F. Forest, Glasgow, from the *Christian Leader*: Do not suppose that 'old maids' are such always against their will, or from lack of matrimonial opportunity. That is not the case. There are thousands of them who might have filled the places of as many (so-called) 'happy wives.' But their high notions of what a husband ought to be, and their independent spirit, and their culture, and their religion made them turn away from the indifferent specimens of manhood presented for their acceptance. I wish there were more women of that kind. I believe as I say, that marriage is desirable, and that for both men and women it contains the possibilities of the highest good; but it must be prudent and wise marriage—not a rash and reckless alliance. 'A mismatched match is worse than an unmated life.' The choice between celibacy and marriage with noodles and ne'er-do-wells with mental and moral good-for-nothings, should never cause a woman one moment's hesitation. She should at once refuse these apologies for men. 'A true man or none at all,' let that be the rule. The moth flying into the flame is but a faint symbol of the folly of the woman who flies into wedlock with a man who has no manly qualities.

A fast youth, a very fast youth offered marriage to a young lady. He said he would give her his hand and heart—it was about all he could give her. It was not every young woman who had the chance of such a husband. He was very particular whom he should marry, having studied carefully the ideal wife; and made up his mind to have her. Did she love him, and would she be willing to live with him in a humble way? Could she cook well and do housework? Had she learned dress-making and millinery? Did she think a wife's duty was to make home happy? Would she consult his wishes as to her associates and pursuits? And so on and so on. The young lady heard him patiently to the end, when she began: "Before I answer your questions, or tell you what I do, or can do. I would like to tell you what I don't do. Would you like to hear? 'Yes' certainly. 'Well, I don't drink. I don't owe my laundress or my tailor anything. I don't stay out all night with my companions in billiard-rooms. I don't lounge at the street corners and ogle the passers by. I never 'stood it' with my friends for cigars and wine suppers. I do none of these things; but I understand you do. Don't you? Yes. And yet you have the impudence to expect a wife with every virtue. No, sir. I spurn your offer. It is an insult. Go, and herd with your own kind. Two or three minutes afterwards the young man was standing thoughtfully on the outside of the door, let us hope a wiser man.

Do You Train Your Child?

"Everything must bend to your will," said a minister to an only daughter of fourteen summers, in a suburb of New York city.

I heard, and, going out, slowly repeated to myself several times, 'Everything must bend to your will.' 'True, true,' I thought, 'but you, father and mother, are yourselves to be blamed for it. Though you have taught your daughter more carefully than even many ministers, you have not sufficiently accustomed her will to yield, but too much to rule; and hence it has not the habit of submitting, but of controlling. 'Everything must bend to your will' describes a state of which the cause is, Everything has bent to your will. The habit power which God designed to be a blessing to your daughter you have allowed to become her curse. For instance, you have gratified your daughter's vanity by letting her wear the earrings that her deceased aunt left her, and allowing her to speak frequently and pleadingly about having a larger and more beautiful pair. How much better to explain fully why not, and

then kindly but firmly forbid her wearing these she has!"

Dear parent, whoever you may be, through you Jesus may teach, but if through you Satan train your child, that child will be Satan's by all the strength of habit or "second nature," added to the unrenewed or first nature. Resolve, then, not to shrink from any part of your responsibility. Teach, but also train. Train carefully, thoroughly, so that your child not only knows but does the right, and continual doing will be followed by the strong habit of doing.

Who are the Christians among us that are "steadfast unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord?" Other things being equal, those who were converted and became Christians in childhood and have been trained up in and for Christ. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."—*The Christian Woman*.

Not Concealed.

How much more of their inner spirit are men constantly displaying to others than they suppose! When they think that no one suspects their discontent, or their vain longings, or their rebellious feelings, or their repressed ill-nature, they are giving open evidence of their state of inner mind; and perhaps that evidence is being noted by the very persons from whom, above all others, they would have it concealed. A Christian father tells of a recent lesson learned by him in this direction. His business had gone all wrong during the day, and many things had combined to try him. He was vexed with himself, and was inclined to be vexed with others; but he was determined to keep all this to himself in the home of which he was largely the light and the life. Imagine, therefore, his surprise, when he heard his little boy, of ten years, in his evening bedside prayer offer up the simple-hearted petition, as he prayed for father and mother, and the other loved ones: "And please, God, help dear papa get on to the track again." The father sounded out a hearty Amen to that petition, and he very quickly sought God's help in getting on to the track again. It would be well if other fathers who are off the track had such a child to win them back to it.—*S. S. Times*.

How to Treat the Bible.

When we stand in front of a mirror we take what comes. We can do nothing else. That is the way to stand in front of the Bible.

A prominent clergyman, whose name we are all familiar with, told me last week that he had just commenced to read the Bible for the purpose of finding out what the Bible says; he had left off his theological and temperamental spectacles and is reading it now with bare eyes.

Proceeding on the basis of that principle, it would soon come about that we should leave off worshipping our own mental bias and commence worshipping God; not sorting out his attributes, but worshipping him, which is another matter; not stumbling over this or the other aspect of his character, but by the aid of his word and his spirit rising to the altitude of a balanced apprehension of him, wherein the rainbow should arch the throne, the prismatic colors into which speculation has split divinity be mingled again in white light, and the sovereignty which commands the will, and the love which persuades the heart, clasp one another in the sweet kingliness of a fatherhood that determines the life.—*Dr. Parkhurst*.

Great works are performed not by strength, but by perseverance.

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