

Greatness in Little Things.

That is not greatness, calmness, strength of soul,
When, once for all, thou dost experience
Some sudden, terrible calamity,
Some last, decisive, heavy blow of fate,
The loss of reputation, of estate,
Of those thou lovest, of health, of happiness—
And still remainest patient and composed—
That is necessity laid upon thy soul;
The suffering of violence humbles thee.
But if thou bearest all the lesser cares,
Burdens, and torments of each passing day,
Nor feel'st them bitter—if, serene and strong,
Thou bearest little trials, blessing God,
That, only that, dear soul, is greatness
strength,
Collectedness of spirit, godly walk.
For little griefs thou mightest not endure,
And scorn them, prove thyself inferior
E'en to thy destiny. Then use, O heart,
Courage and strength, mildness and cheer-
fulness,
Where only thou canst do it in little
things.

—A. Schaeffer.

Pitching the Tent Towards Sodom.

The history of Lot nineteen hundred years before Christ is full of instruction and warning to us who live nineteen hundred years after Christ. Such histories are not pleasant to contemplate; but we read them as we read danger-signals by the public highway warning us of the broken bridge. Still, God has mercifully written them down for us; we ignore them at our peril.

That Lot was, in the groundwork of his character, a good man, there can be little reason to doubt; indeed, Peter expressly speaks of him as "just Lot," but he was the type of men who, while in the main good and respectable, yet exhibit large weakness, a conspicuous stripe of selfishness, and no uncertain taint of meanness. The hope of worldly gain alone determined his choice of a residence when, taking advantage of Abraham's generous offer, he "chose him all the plain of Jordan" because it was well watered and fertile. That valley had become proverbial for its fertility; but, like the vine clad sides of Vesuvius, it was the volcanic fires that slumbered beneath that made it so. Nevertheless its promised riches filled his eye and inspired his greed; and, though he knew that "the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly," yet he chose it, and pitched his tent toward that fated city. But he was only pitching his tent toward Sodom, not in it. And no doubt, like men of the present day when taking the first step in a doubtful and hazardous career, he justified and encouraged himself in his course by mentally scorning the possibility of his ever becoming a Sodomite, or that his choice could result in a melancholy catastrophe to himself or his household. But the sad sequel, as seen in repeated disasters that came to him, illustrates the proverb, "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool." Launching his boat (to change the figure) on the strong current of worldliness, where drifting is so much easier than resisting, we soon find him in the doomed city whose streets reeked with moral pollution, and whose very name was a synonym for all that was revolting in human conduct. Here not only was his hope of gain cut off, but he lost all that he had carried with him; for, when the kings of the east plundered Sodom, the record is, "they took Lot and his goods." Grievous and stinging as this loss of property, he rejected the sharp warning, and, like the luckless gambler, resolved upon another "throw," went back to his old haunt, and refused to quit the place till driven out by the avenging angel. He went in with large possessions; he came out a penniless bankrupt. Disastrous as was the influence of a residence in Sodom to Lot and his substance, it was infinitely more so to his family. In love with its fashions and follies, they naturally caught the infection of the corrupt city, and carried its offensive taint with them. But, as God has mercifully dropped the veil of silence over their subsequent history, we would not attempt to lift it. Had Lot foreseen the dreadful doom of the city, the loss of his property, and the demoralization of his household, he would have started back with horror; but the exhalations from a worldly spirit, like the vapor in "The Court of Death," rose up and blinded him to the possible direful consequences of his choice.

No character in the Bible utters a more pronounced warning of the issue of a worldly choice than that of Lot. While it would be easy to make a general application of this warning to all who are looking Sodomward, its special appeal is that of a religious man to the religious—to those who have "professed a good profession before many witnesses." It is the note of

warning of "a good man gone wrong," not of deliberate purpose, but by reason of an overweening confidence in his ability to stand where others fell. It is the cry of one in the snare to those about to enter the path where snares are spread.

When a Christian man chooses his place of residence with an eye solely to pecuniary advantage, and in utter disregard of spiritual privileges and of the deadening influence of irreligious associations upon the religious sensibilities of himself and of his children, he has made a long pitch towards Sodom. Save it over to his conscience as he will—that it is only a temporary arrangement, and that by his good example he may elevate society about him—his ruling passion will assert itself, and he will find himself as powerless for good as was Lot in the city of the plain. As a pungent writer has aptly said, "He who enters a den of wickedness for the sake of worldly profit is not likely to make a very successful missionary." No man can sacrifice his religious privileges at the shrine of Mammon and make a success of his religion.

When Christians venture upon the practice of questionable amusements—such for example, as are represented by the card-table, the dance-hall, and the theater—to the neglect of the cultivation of their spiritual life, as invariably happens, it is no lack of charity to say that, with Lot, they have pitched their tent toward Sodom. It is useless to discuss whether such practices are in themselves sinful or not; it is enough to know that they are "weights" always and everywhere. With an observation of thirty-five years, and after a somewhat diligent inquiry, the writer has yet to find the first instance where with devotion to such practices has been combined a strong, influential, aggressive, spiritual life. They may still wear a shining profession, but they are not the men and women that can be depended upon for work. They may count on the church-roll, but seldom on the list of those three paces in front when volunteers for self-denying service are called for. They may occasionally express a "wish to go to heaven," but too often they are like the oarsman who while looking one way pulls the other.

For his aggressive work God wants men consecrated within and without. Uniforms, however dazzling, will never fight a nation's battles; as said England's great critic, "We can never fight the French by three hundred thousand red uniforms; there must be men in the inside of them." With equal assurance we say we cannot fight the world, the flesh, and the devil by the tinsel of profession; behold that there must be the power of a consecrated life. No man can sacrifice his time and pour out his enthusiasm at the shrine of questionable amusements and worldly pleasure, and make a success in the line of spiritual life. His tent-door looks the wrong way. Which way does yours look?—*Dr. Dargun in the Star.*

Above All—The Cross of Christ!

BY THE REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

A vital feature of good Christianity is cross-bearing for the Master. Good preaching means cross-lifting. Good the manger of Bethlehem every footstep of Jesus moves straight forward toward the cross of Calvary. His mission to earth converges there. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the only gospel that was preached was the Gospel of atoning blood. It was the keynote of Paul's wondrous ministry; whatever else he omitted, he never omitted the "faithful saying." He determined to know nothing "save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The only preaching in these days that can silence skepticism, convict sinners, and save the penitent is that which emphasizes the guilt of the human heart and points to the only Saviour, the crucified Son of God.

The most imperial preacher of this century was Thomas Chalmers. During the earliest years of his ministry his preaching was mainly ethical; his Gospel was a Gospel of morality. He aimed to reform his hearers from such vices as dishonesty, profanity, falsehood, licentiousness, and cruelty. After a few years new light burst upon him, and his ministry became intensely evangelical. His testimony is very remarkable. He declared that while he was simply trying to reform men of their vices, he "never heard of any such reformation having been effected! If there were such cases, they never came to my knowledge. It was not until the free offer of forgiveness of sin through the atoning blood of Christ was urged upon men that I ever heard of any of these subordinate reformations." He discovered that what men needed was not new habits,

but a new heart. The most eloquent preacher of his age had to learn that his pulpit work was ignored by the Holy Spirit as long as he ignored the transcendent truth of redemption by the cross of Jesus Christ.

In these days Christian sociology is pushed to the front, and it is claimed by some that it should be the main theme for the pulpit. Undoubtedly there are many social reforms that ought to be advocated from the pulpit and have their proper place in the activities of the church. But they must never be permitted to crowd Jesus Christ from His throne, or His cross from its central place in the whole scheme of man's reformation and man's redemption. A clean house saves no man who has not a clean heart. Sin lies at the bottom of human suffering and wretchedness; the blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin. Dr. Chalmers' example is strongly in evidence here also. During his magnificent ministry in Glasgow he was the foremost social reformer in the British pulpit, and was summoned more than once before committees of Parliament to give his judgment on reform of the poor laws, the amelioration of the working classes, and similar sociological problems. He always made the civilization of the lapsed masses subordinate to their evangelization, and presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the prime factor in their elevation. Chalmers, the most powerful preacher of this century, and Spurgeon, its most popular preacher, were alike in their supreme exaltation of the cross of Christ as the "wisdom and power of God" to man's salvation.

Brethren, thrust nothing in the way that shall obscure or hide the cross of Calvary! A clear distinct look at Jesus is what every sinner needs to convict him of guilt and bring him to penitence. The preaching that melts hard hearts is Christ-preaching—cross—preaching. It wounds and it heals. It kills sin and brings to the penitent sinner a new life. Moses was commanded to do nothing but to lift up the brazen serpent before the bitten and dying multitude in the camp of Israel. We ministers find our foremost duty and our holiest delight in simply lifting up the atoning lamb of God before the eyes of our congregations. Nothing else can touch and fire the true believer like the vision of his bleeding Lord. Lift up the cross! Let us rally to that as the last hope of a sin-cursed world—as the only break-water against the floods of error and iniquity. If the cross of Jesus Christ cannot save the world, it is gone! But it will. The Almighty has hung the destiny of our race on that cross; our duty begins and ends in presenting that one beacon of salvation full before the eye of every immortal soul. Paul gloried only in that. Luther's theology centered around it. The truth by which John Calvin's strongly fortified heart was stormed and carried by the Divine Spirit was the simple, irresistible truth that Jesus Christ died to save sinners. John and Charles Wesley, in the early march of Methodism, kept step to the music of their resounding hymn:

"Extol the Lamb of God,
The all-atoning Lamb;
Redemption in His blood
Throughout the world proclaim:
The year of jubilee is come!
Return, ye ransomed sinners, home."
—The Evangelist

A Strange but True Story.

(BY MRS. H. GRATTAN GUINNESS.)

A wealthy farmer, who cultivated some thousands of acres, had by his benevolence endeared himself greatly to his large staff of laborers. He had occasion to leave the country in which his property was situated for some years, but before doing so, he gave his people clearly to understand that he wished the whole of the cultivated land to be kept in hand, and all the unenclosed moor and marsh lands to be enclosed and drained and brought into cultivation; that even the hills were to be terraced, and the poor mountain pastures manured, so that no single corner of the estate should remain neglected and barren. Ample resources were left for the execution of these works, and there were sufficient hands to have accomplished the whole within the first few years of the proprietor's absence.

He was detained in the country to which he had been called very many years. Those whom he left children were men and women when he came back, and so the number of his tenants and laborers was vastly multiplied. Was the task he had left them accomplished? Alas! no. Bog and moor and mountain waste were only wilder and more desolate than ever. Fine rich virgin soil, by thousands of acres, was bearing only briars and thistles. Meadow after meadow was utterly barren for want of culture. Nay, by

far the larger part of the farm seemed never to have been visited by his servants.

Had they been idle? Some had. But large numbers had been industrious enough. They had expended a vast amount of labor, and skilled labor, too, but they had bestowed it all on the park immediately around the house. This had been cultivated to such a pitch of perfection that the workmen had scores of times quarrelled with each other because the operations of one interfered with those of his neighbor.

And a vast amount of labor had been lost, in sowing the very same patch, for instance, with corn fifty times over in one season, so that the seed never had time to germinate, and grow and bear fruit; in caring for the forest trees, as if they had been saplings; in manuring soils already too fat and watering pastures already too wet.

The farmer was positively astonished at the misplaced ingenuity with which labor and seed and manure, skill and time and strength, had been wasted for no result. The very same amount of toil and capital, expended according to his directions, would have brought the whole demense into culture, and yielded a noble revenue. But season after season had rolled away in sad succession, leaving those unbounded acres of various, but all reclaimable soils, barren and useless; and as to the park, it would have been far more productive and perfect had it been relieved of the extraordinary and unaccountable amount of energy expended on it.

Why did these laborers act so absurdly? Did they wish to labor in vain? On the contrary they were forever craving for fruit, coveting good crops, longing for great results.

Did they not wish to carry out the farmer's views about his property? Well, they seemed to have that desire, for they were always reading the directions he wrote, and said continually to each other—"You know we have to bring the whole property into order." But they did not do it.

Some few tried, and ploughed up a little plot here and there, and sowed corn and other crops. Perhaps these failed, and so the rest got discouraged? Oh, no; they saw that the yield was magnificent; far richer in proportion than they got themselves. They clearly perceived that, but yet they failed to follow a good example. Nay—when the labors of a few in some distant valley had resulted in a crop they were all unable to gather in by themselves, others would not even go and help them to bring in the sheaves! They preferred watching for weeds among the roses, in the over-crowded garden, and counting the blades of grass in the park, and the leaves on the trees.

Then they were fools surely, not wise men? Traitors, not true servants to their Lord?

Ah! I can't tell! You must ask Him that! I only know their Master said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," and that 1,800 years afterwards they had not even mentioned that there was a Gospel to one-half of the world.

Holding Fast The Love of God.

Far away from home, the son of a loving Christian parents wandered in paths of sin, unmindful of that affection which had been shown toward him from early infancy. To those who observed this singular obduracy of heart and base ingratitude, his conduct was a deep mystery. "How can he be restored?" they asked. "What method should be employed to reinvest him with that love which he had once cherished for his devoted parents?" was their earnest inquiry. Finally it was decided that a concerted effort should be made to bring to his remembrance certain tokens of their love, certain sacrifices made by them wholly in his interest, especially in times of former weakness and helplessness. Their effort was successful. A new awakening of tender regard for his parents occurred, which was immediately followed by a desire and a purpose to make known the change to them. The result was most happy; henceforth he was their dutiful son, bearing light and blessing into a Christian home. The returning prodigal, having at last "come to himself," retraced his steps and found in a father's heart a welcome.

This incident has its lesson for us. How can we be habitually affected by the love of our heavenly Father if we do not consider the evidences of His love? "We have known and believed the love that God hath toward us. Knowledge always precedes love. This is the only way by which we can be built up in the 'most holy faith.' This is the effectual way by which we can 'keep ourselves in the love of God.'"

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When, therefore, we give our attention to a review of God's great goodness unto us we are taking the very first step toward holding fast the love of God. The tokens of His love will become more and more manifest as the mind continues to reflect upon the delightful incidents in our past career in which divine Providence has helped us times without number, when perfect wisdom has dissipated our clouds of ignorance and omnipotence has supplied strength in our weakness.

Dr. Thomas Chalmers says: "To keep himself in the love of God is a habit, with the maintenance of which the will of man has most essentially to do, because it is at his will that he keeps himself in the thought of God's love toward him. To keep alive the impression of Him in the midst of bustle and company and worldly avocations; to recall the thought of Him and of His kindness under crosses and vexations and annoyances; to be still and know that He is God, even when beset with temptations to impatience and discontent; never to lose sight of Him as merciful and gracious; and, above all, never to lose sight of that great propitiation by which in every time of trouble I have the privilege of access with confidence to my heavenly Father—these are the very acts of the will that sustain the love of God within me."

Never Give Up.

Never sit down and confess yourself beaten. If there are any difficulties in the way, struggle with them like a man. Use all your resources, put forth all your strength, and "never say die." The case may seem hopeless, but there is generally a way out somewhere.

Are you bound and fettered by hurtful habits? Do not despair. You can't do much to help yourself. It is true, but there is One who never fails to strengthen the young man when he makes an honest attempt to overcome temptation and master every evil passion. "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings." That is the experience of thousands of our fellows who have begun to sink in the quick-sands of sin, and have reached out a hand to accept the loving help of the strong and gentle Christ. While He lives and loves, no man need ever give up.

Triumphs come after trials have been heroically endured.

When the prayer meeting is simply attended, and cold, lifeless, and formal, there is one who is happy—that is the devil.

A handful of good life is worth a bushel of learning.—*Hebert.*

Let every dawn of morning be to you as the beginning of life.

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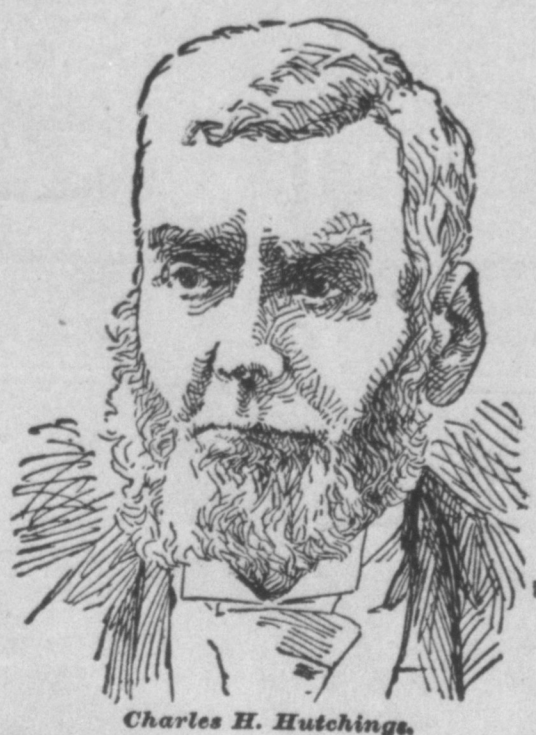
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