

Missteps.

Nothing can call them back—the years
With ungodly riches sent,
That blind complaints or baseless fears
Fouled of their just intent;
No future need no present pain—
Nothing can call them back again.

Nothing can change, for you or me,
Those moments, big with fate,
Whose awful power of destiny
We recognize too late;
Yet error, in the courts of Time,
Is punished equally with crime.

Aye, and the schools, where we take
Sad counsel, strive in vain
To reconcile the heart, or make
The dark enigma plain;
Philosophy, though heaven-born,
Grief and remorse will put to scorn.

Like Jacob in the wondrous tale,
Convicted of defeat,
Each soul alone, in Peniel's vale,
The Man of God must wrest—
Must wrest deliverance from the cease
Of infinite loss and impotence.

Dread Angel! Suns withdraw their light,
The stars break up and flee,
While, in the deep and dark of night,
Our spirits close with Thee;
Yet is Thy voice the Voice divine,
And Isaac's blessing less than Thine
—The Independent.

The Ministry of Joy.

The human soul has an infinite capacity for joy. The greater part of sorrow and pain is borne with more or less fortitude because of the joy which they may after a time lead to. In the natural order of things, joy is neither abiding nor supreme. Beneath the low vault of childhood the natural man finds his most unalloyed pleasures. It is common to hear grown people say of children, "They are enjoying the happiest period of their lives." Age is associated with care and gloom. Nature has no kindly offices for her veterans except a hiding place for their sorrows, along with the tomb for their joys. Great religious systems add to the weariness of the flesh. The fear of higher powers keeps millions of human beings in bondage. The marks of age and heaviness are upon most of the religious faiths of the world.

Christianity alone forms the exception. Its abiding manifestation is joy. Its sorrows are never crushing, but disciplinary: working out for us a far more and exceeding weight of glory. It fulfills the prophecy, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." Its veterans are happy old men whose faces are turned to the rising sun. Its attitude is to rejoice evermore, and in everything to give thanks.

Not only in certain qualities which are conditions entering the kingdom of heaven, but in the inspirations of daily life, the Christian is much like the child. He has the same freshness of vision, the same recuperative forces, the same forgetfulness of past ills, the same divine curiosity, and the same faculty for extracting joy out of all sorts of conditions. There is this difference: the child's happiness rests upon innocence and absence of knowledge—his ignorance is bliss; the Christian's happiness is conditioned in purity and knowledge. He understands all that the cynic and misanthrope talk about, better than they do themselves, and still is happy. He has no illusions to outgrow like the child. His visions will not "fade into the light of common day;" they will merge into the glorious realization of immortality.

The New Testament is a joyful book. From the announcement to the final vision of Revelation joy is the predominating note. The angel's assurance to the shepherds was prophetic of what is continually being fulfilled. "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people."

The subject of the Sunday-school lesson next Sunday (Acts iii. 1-6) is both historic and representative. The miracle fits in as a harmonious fact among the effects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Healing and joy go wherever the gospel finds an open door. Humanity is lame and impotent; the grace of Christ removes our disabilities and quickens all our powers. But it does more; it furnishes the renewed man with the noblest uses for his restored powers. It finds him in the temple worshipping God. His body itself becomes a temple for the Holy Spirit, and his whole being is filled with fruitful works and rejoicing.

The elation of the man whom Peter healed has the same source as the joy of the redeemed sinner. And if this man could be so happy over a minor physical blessing, what should be the Christian's joy over the full freedom of sins forgiven. But often the gratitude of believers is so suppressed that the world does not discover it. Our religion is often pervaded by a subtle asceticism which is not confined to the cloister, but mars the sermon and pervades the prayer-meeting. With many good people, to be sombre is to

be pious. Now, Christian life has its shadows, but light prevails. Joy must be the master in our assemblies. Despondent prayers, drooping testimonies, morbid reflections on one's own sinfulness and on the general depravity of the world, do not belong to the true gospel ministry which every disciple should fulfill.

The Book of Acts is a record of joyful victory. The disciples were said to be filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Modern church life needs nothing more than to be lifted out of the shadows of a formal, worldly culture, and brought into the sunshine of spiritual rejoicing. The prayer of sombre Christians should be, "Lord, restore unto me the joys of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy way and sinners shall be converted unto thee." The jubilant church is the conquering church.—"Chris. Standard."

Growth By Consecration.

This is the sort of growth which an individual Christian or a church should rank most highly. Growth in external prosperity and apparent influence is desirable, but of minor importance. Growth in the membership of a church also is desirable, but may be a cause of weakness rather than strength. Even in respect to methods of Christian service those applications of the Gospel to life which specially characterize the institutional church, it is equally true that unless their multiplication and prosecution be accompanied by a steady growth of the spirit of personal consecration, they are almost sure to fail of their intended result.

True consecration promotes concentration of spiritual purpose. It increases definiteness of aim. It enlightens the judgment. It develops skill in interpreting the divine will. It brings one into closer, sweeter sympathy with Jesus Christ, and quenches selfishness and unholiness. It teaches intelligent, hearty dependence upon the Holy Spirit for both individual progress and for that of the church. Without such concentration, enlightenment, wisdom, sympathy, and childlike trust there can be no real, reliable, spiritual growth. With them there cannot fail to be.

The wise, efficient grasp and use of spiritual opportunities follow naturally. Such opportunities present themselves constantly. God opens doors and suggests pathways of usefulness in His name as fast as we are prepared to enter them. And each in some manner proves stimulating and developing by the new experiences to which it leads. In spiritual things preeminently growth depends upon activity and advance. Not to go forward never means to stand still. It always means to recede. We need the enlargement of ability, the increase in fertility of resource, the special encouragement due to the consciousness of noble endeavor made, if not of actual success attained, if we are to grow solidly in grace and service.

This enrichment of spirit is the best consequence of growth through consecration. How conspicuous it was in Jesus Himself! How evident it becomes in the disciples and the other early believers as we study their histories! As we learn to know the Almighty better by giving ourselves more unreservedly to His service, we inevitably absorb and reflect more of His Spirit. We learn to look at all times more from His point of view. We become possessed by the same aims which He cherishes, and the pertinence and beauty seem increasing. It is evident of that figure of speech which Jesus used when He said, "I am the vine. Ye are the branches." Our very being and nature become one with His, and His spiritual life-blood flows in our veins.—"The Congregationalist."

Friendly Criticism.

We can never make the most and best of our life if we refuse to be taught by others than ourselves. The best-made man is the one who in his formative years had the benefit of wholesome criticism. His life is developed on all sides. Faults are corrected. We all need, not only as a part of our education, but in all our life work, the corrective influence of the opinions and suggestions of others. Some people are only hurt, never helped, by criticism, even when it is most sincere. They regard it as always unkindly, and meet it with a bitter feeling. They resent it from whatever source it may come, and in whatever form, as something impertinent. They regard it as unfriendly, as a personal assault against which they must defend themselves. They seem to think of their own life as something fenced about by such sanctities that no other person can, with pro-

priety, offer even a suggestion concerning anything that is theirs, unless it be in the way of commendation. They have such an opinion of the infallibility of their own judgment and the flawless excellence of their own performance, that it seems never to occur to them as a possibility that the judgment of others might add further wisdom or point out anything better. So they utterly refuse to accept criticism, however kindly, or any suggestion which looks to anything different from what they have done. They regard as an enemy even the most intimate disapproval. They hint, however kindly, that this or that might be otherwise. It is hard to maintain cordial relations of friendship with such persons, for no one wishes to take the trouble to keep a lock on the door of their lips all the while for fear of offending a self-conceited friend.

This building of character is something of the greatest importance to us all; but especially to those whose years are few, whose habits are not yet formed, and who have much to learn. Their ideals may be high, but they will none the less need to be corrected and confirmed by the best counsels.—J. R. Miller, D. D.

Christ the Power of God.

Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is not only the Wisdom, but the Power, of God. The confidence in the flesh, along with much glorying in Christ Jesus; is to be seen and felt in so much of the work of the Christian Church in which human arrangements take a much larger place than the waiting on the power that comes from on high. In the larger ecclesiastical organizations, in individual churches and circles, in the inner life of the heart and closet, alas, how much unsuccessful effort, what oft-repeated failure, is to be traced to this one evil! There is no want of acknowledging Christ, His person and work, as our only hope, no want of giving Him the glory, and yet so much confidence in the flesh, rendering it of none effect.

As in sermon or address, in book or conversation or private prayer, the fullness of Jesus was opened up to us with the possibility of a holy life in Him, the soul felt it all so beautiful and so simple that nothing could any longer keep it back. And, perhaps, as it accepted of what was seen to be so sure and so near, it entered into an enjoyment and experienced a power before unknown. But it did not last. There was a worm at its root. Vain was the search for what the cause of the discomfiture was, or the way of restoration.

Listen, my brother, to the blessed teaching of God's word today. It was the confidence in the flesh that spoiled thy glorying in Christ Jesus. It was self doing what the Spirit alone can do; it was the soul taking the lead, in the hope that the Spirit would second its efforts, instead of trusting the Holy Spirit to lead and do all, and then waiting on him. It was following Jesus without the denial of self. It was this that was the secret trouble. Come and listen to Paul as he tells of the only safeguard against this danger: "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and have no glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Here are the two elements of spiritual worship. The Spirit exalts Jesus and abases the flesh. "And if we would truly glory in Jesus and have Him glorified in us, if we would know the glory of Jesus in personal and unchanging experience free from the impotence which always marks the efforts of the flesh, we must simply learn what this worship of God by the Spirit is.

Yield yourself to His leading. We have seen that leading is not just in the mind or thoughts, but in the life and disposition. Yield yourself to God, to be guided by the Holy Spirit in all your conduct. He is promised to those who love Jesus and obey Him; fear not to say that He knows you do love and do obey Him with your whole heart. And my whole religion will be: No confidence in the flesh, glorying in Christ Jesus, worship by the Spirit of God.—Andrew Murray.

Getting Power.

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman tells the "Golden Rule" how he had in his parish a young Irishman. All would declare him to be ignorant, and he was: but God marvelously used him. This was the secret, in the evangelist's words:

"With a heart burdened for the men of the city, I called together a few of the men of the church, and, laying before them the plan I had in mind, told them first of all that we could do nothing without the 'infilling of the Holy Ghost.'"

"When this had been explained, I noticed a man leave the room. He did not return while the meeting was in session. When I sought him I

found him in one of the lower rooms of the church, literally on his face before God in prayer.

"I shall never forget his petition: 'O God, I plead with thee for this blessing;' then, as if God were showing him what was in the way, he said,

'My Father, I will give up every known sin, only I plead with thee for power;' and then, as if his individual sins were passing before him, he said again and again, 'I will give them up—I will give them up.' Then without any emotion, he rose from his knees, turned his face heavenward, and simply said, 'And now I claim the blessing.'

"For the first time he became sensible of my presence, and, with a shining countenance, he reached out his hands to clasp mine. You could feel the very presence of the Spirit as he said, 'I have received him—I have received him.' And I believe he had; for in the next few months he led more than sixty men into the kingdom of God. His whole life had been transformed."

Moody On Prayer.

I tell you, friends, we can pray so that the very streets of Boston will be charged with the Spirit of God. But if we are going to do it we must get done with formal prayers. They are an abomination to God and man. I've seen a prayer-meeting just killed by some one praying who was dead. Cold, prayerless prayer, won't help this city. [As an illustration he held up an artificial rose.] That is a prayerless prayer, a man-made prayer. It is a beautiful rose, but it is dead. It has no odor, and is fit only for a woman's hat. It could affect only the head, never the heart. But this [holding up a great American Beauty rose] is different. This is a prayerful prayer, God-made, which goes straight to the heart. We want to pray God to deliver us from prayerless prayers. There are lots of folks who would kill a prayer meeting. Some of them don't live very far from your house. The fact is, if you looked in the looking-glass you might see them.

May we have real prayer! Don't talk about the crowds at the meetings. Never mind that. Has the word struck you? That's the point. There seems to be an idea around Boston that God's plans are fixed, and that although prayer may be a very healthy exercise, you won't get anything. That's wrong. The night before the accident to the Spree occurred I had been talking with one of those men, who called himself a philosopher and said prayer was of value only as an exercise. The next morning, when it looked as if we were all going to the bottom, he didn't stop to discuss prayer. He went at it. Not for exercise, either.—The Advance.

Losing that We Might Gain.

In every department of life there is this principle at work—losing that we might gain; a present risk in order to secure, if possible, a future gain. But it often happens that the only certain thing about it is the present risk and loss; for the gain never comes. In this respect things temporal differ greatly from things spiritual; for in the spiritual world we must lose to gain—we must die to live; and if we do so, there are no chances, but all prizes. "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." This is the law of the Master whom we serve, and he is able to make it good to us. You may lose your health, your strength, your liberty, your happiness, for his sake; but his promise to you is that you have only made a good investment by the loss, and the profits will come by and by, when the divine dividends are declared. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby." Take heart, then, my friends; for the weeping may endure for the night, yet joy cometh in the morning of resurrection and glory.—Temple Magazine.

The Joy of The Lord.

The coming of joy into our hearts may be obstructed by an unfortunate habit of choosing to dwell upon the shadows rather than upon the sunshine of life. Our heavenly Father does not wish to deal with His children always as with the rod of chastisement. He knows we all need to be cheered by the evidences of His approval. It is the sign of human weakness to treat our off spring with unrelieved strokes of discipline. But our divine Father never commits such an error in the government of His children. Love prompts Him to inspire our confidence by tender appeals and supreme acts of goodness. He would say: "Child of earth, look up; do not be discouraged. I am thy Lord, merciful and gracious." Nevertheless when clouds do gather

a love us and joy is far removed, let us not be unmindful of the fact that we have then an opportunity to show to others the integrity of our purpose, the loyalty of our souls to Him who is seeking our spiritual development more than our present experience of joy. If we are seen to be watchful and faithful to duty under such circumstances of trial, we may be able to accomplish much while passing through the furnace.

Faith in God.

As a trembling hand may receive the costliest gift, so a timid and trembling faith may appropriate God's saving grace. As the weightiest messages may be transmitted over the slenderest wires, so the Holy Spirit may be conducted to the heart by a thread of faith so delicate that it seems hardly able to sustain its own weight. Look not at the weakness of your faith, then, but at the infinite ability of Christ, "the Author and Perfecter of our faith." Then faith, as a grain of mustard seed, will transplant the mountain to the sea.—Free Methodist.

Random Readings.

The secret of most men's misery is that they are trying to please themselves.—F. D. Maurice.

The only way to regenerate the world is to do the duty which lies nearest us, and not to hunt after grand, far-fetched ones for ourselves. If each drop of rain chose where it should fall, God's showers would not fail as they do now.—Charles Kingsley.

The New York "Dispatch" strikes a certain nail squarely on the head in the following: "The boys of to-day who steal rides on vehicles are likely to become the thieves of to-morrow. When children steal, whatever the form of theft, the parent should sternly teach them better. The parent who neglects so to do contributes to the boy's untoward career. Let it never be forgotten that theft is theft, whether it be only a three-cent street car ride that is stolen, or a gold watch, or \$10,000.

The venerable Dr. James Martineau, now in his ninety-sixth year, recently gave expression to the following noble sentiment: Nothing that is worthy of a living man can be unworthy of a dying one; and whatever is shocking in the last moment would be disgraceful in every other. . . . He who is snatched from the world at his prayers when his work is overdue may well pass with culprit heart away; while the punctual Christian need not be scared to find himself brushing his hat within a minute's reach of the Saints in heaven.

No true minister will think that his work is done in any community or church simply because he has received a large number of people into the church. When children are born into a family, the work for them has but commenced. When young people are introduced into a school, their education has only begun. When young converts are received into the membership of the church, the work for their Christian culture must know no interruption until they have been brought to mature development and power for usefulness. The work of training is scarcely less important than that of securing the conversion. The work of the evangelist must be followed up persistently and faithfully by the work of the pastor and preacher.—Herald and Presbyterian.

A Point to Remember.

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FACE HUMORS

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