

Pray Without Ceasing.

Unanswered yet, the prayer your lips have pleaded

In agony of heart these many years?
Does faith begin to fail, is hope declining,
And think you all in vain those falling tears?

Say not the Father has not heard your prayer,
You shall have your desire, some time, somewhere!

Unanswered yet? Tho' when you first presented

This one petition at the Father's throne,
It seemed you could not wait the time of asking.

So anxious was your heart to have it done;
If years have passed since then, do not despair

For God will answer you some time, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? But you are not unheeded;

The promises of God forever stand;
To him our days and years alike are equal.
"Have faith in God!" It is your Lord's command.

Hold on to Jacob's angel, and your prayer
Shall bring a blessing down, some time, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say unanswered;

Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done.
The work began when first your prayer was uttered.

And God will finish what He has begun
Keep incense burning at the shrine of prayer.

And glory shall descend, some time, somewhere.

Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered;

Her feet are firmly planted on the Rock.
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted.

Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock.

She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
And cries, "It shall be done, some time somewhere."

—"Watchword and Truth."

The Conversion of a "Bum."

LEAVES FROM PASTORS' LIVES.

BY REV. ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR, D. D.

Can a "bum" be converted? To this question different pastors give contradictory answers. One of the most prominent pastors in this city recently stated that, notwithstanding all the manifold activities of his active church during his score of years, he had never known a "bum" to be genuinely converted. Few pastors in any city have had so wide an experience in dealing with men of this class as the pastor to whom this remark is attributed. His church is the centre of many-sided efforts for the physical, social, mental and moral well-being of all classes and conditions of men and women.

Of this church the late Rev. Dr. Howard Crosby said that its soup kitchen was its most active department. Perhaps this department is too active. In all our cities to-day there are those who will follow the church, as men followed the Master in his day, for the loaves and fishes. It is interesting to observe how seldom our Lord wrought miracles in order to furnish the bread that perishes. According to its population, the needs of Palestine were as numerous and varied in Christ's day as are the needs of any country in our day. It is observable that when he wrought miracles to furnish food for the physical man, he made the miracle chiefly introductory to a discourse on himself as the bread that came down from heaven. His great rule for the salvation of men from all the ills to which flesh is heir was their genuine conversion. He went out himself, and he sent out his apostles to evangelize the masses of men. This was his sovereign remedy; this was the divine panacea.

If men are truly converted, and so become honest, industrious and economical, they will readily solve the problem of physical support. True religion puts purity into the heart, brains into the head, industry into the life, and so money in the pocket. It is altogether likely that some churches have unduly magnified the supply of mere physical wants. This is a danger to which certain institutional churches are clearly exposed. Here, as everywhere, the example of the Master is of the utmost value; and that example clearly shows that he kept the supply of physical need at the minimum, while he placed the distinctively spiritual side of Christian work at the maximum.

That conversions among those who follow the Church merely for what they can get out of it, are extremely rare, no one familiar with the facts will deny. This is a well-nigh hopeless class. They live constantly under the impulse of their lower natures. They stimulate their worst ambitions as they come into the atmosphere of the Church. The Church must, therefore, carefully guard itself against ministering to the development of laziness, shiftlessness and dishonesty in word and act, in its relations to this large class. Formation is better

than reformation. More and more our wisest Christian workers are seeking the early conversion and wise training of children. More and more do such workers see that the devil ought not to have sway over the earlier years of our young people. The stains of sin can never be washed out of the soul, so far as concerns their sad memory. It is unspeakably sorrowful that men who are converted late in life have lost their true life, even though the soul may be saved.

But that now and then a genuine "bum" is truly saved cannot be doubted. There is power enough in the love of Christ to break the hardest heart; there is merit enough in his atonement to wash away scarlet and crimson sins, so far as concerns their subsequent power and their future penalty.

A few years ago a well-known evangelist was holding Gospel meetings Sunday evenings in a building known as the Park Theatre, in this city. Five young men, generally under the influence of liquor, attended the service on a Sunday evening. With one of these young men I am now specially concerned. Scarcely knowing what he did, he remained to the inquiry-meeting. A beautiful, cultured and consecrated woman sat beside him and told him of Christ's ability and willingness to save the lost. He was stupid from drink, and remembered but two things concerning this experience—the angelic love as it seemed to him, of this woman, and his own promise to be present on the following Sunday night. He kept that promise. Perfectly sober, he listened to the earnest appeals of the preacher. The Spirit of God laid hold of him with wonderful power. He was deeply convicted of sin, and that night he was soundly converted to God.

Let us look at him as he thus begins the new life. He is of medium height, has coarse and unintelligent features, with a face marked by dissipation, and with all the distinctive characteristics, in brogue and act, of a street gamine. But the leaven of the new life is already penetrating this mass of unfavorable conditions. He at once dropped his old companions and his sinful habits. He at once began to give testimony, not only in the religious meetings, but also in his daily vocation, to the saving power of Christ. He became the object of the criticism and scorn of his former companions; he became also the subject of his father's bitter persecutions. The father declaring that he would prefer to see him drunk in the gutter as a Catholic, rather than see him sober, industrious and prosperous as a Protestant. His testimonies were marked by a Bowery brogue, and colored by the nationality of his parents. His violation of the simplest rules of grammar was equalled only by his ignorance of the most familiar passages of the Bible. But the new life was in his soul; and it struggled heroically against its unfavorable environment. He began earnestly to study the Bible, and its matchless power in disciplining the mind and improving the speech was soon apparent. His public testimonies soon became intelligent, scriptural and instructive. The expression of his face became agreeable, and his whole life was transformed.

There were four others who with him professed conversion at this time. Before a committee made up of some of the most prominent and noble workers of the Young Men's Christian Association of this city—under whose auspices the meetings were conducted, at which these young men were converted—the question was anxiously discussed as to whether any church in the vicinity would receive these young men as members. Some of the committee honestly doubted whether any such converts would have a welcome should they make application for membership in any of the churches. One member of the committee named a church then in the neighbourhood in which these converts would have a cordial welcome. In that way the writer came in contact with this group of young men. He remembers well their testimony before the church when they made their first formal confession of Christ. There baptism into the threefold Name soon followed. They were watched over with patient and tender pastoral solicitude. No pains were omitted to make their new life socially attractive, intellectually educative and spiritually instructive. Four of the five did well; running faithfully not only for a time, but through the years, and one of the—the man to whom reference has been fully made—did excellently well. Some years later I officiated at his marriage, when an intelligent and consecrated American girl became his wife. This man has never wearied in well-doing. Having put his hand to the plow, he has never gone back, nor even looked back.

Whitefield was rebuked for declaring in a discourse that Christ would

receive even the devil's castaways; but that very day, while at dinner at Lady Huntington's, he was called out to meet two women who were sinners and to whose broken hearts and blasted lives that remark gave hope and healing. Thus his apparently extravagant words found their justification. The Gospel has lost none of its pristine power; it is still the power—the dynamite, as the original word means—of God unto salvation to every one who believeth.

The Church has a great duty in opening her doors and giving a welcome to those whom Christ has received, to whatever social class they may chance to belong. The Church is the school of Christ; all who are willing to learn at the Master's feet should have welcome. The Church is, in some sense, a hospital; and all who need and desire healing should be received. It is not simply a place for the strong, but also for the weak; not simply for the upright in life, but also for the penitent.

He Feared the Gate.

Late one stormy evening the old doctor was summoned to see a man who had been attacked with sudden illness on the cars and had stopped at a little inn near the railway station, about three miles from the village. The patient proved to be Squire Joyce from the neighboring county, whom the doctor slightly knew. He examined him carefully and gave him medicines taken from his saddle bags. Then he rose to go, smiling cheerfully down at the anxious face of the sufferer.

"You will, I think, find yourself better in the morning; able I hope, to go on your journey," he said.

"Yes. Stay a minute, doctor. I want you to be honest with me. I have had seizures like this before. Shall I have them again?"

"It is probable."

"I want the truth all of it."

"Yes, they will return."

"I may die in one of them to-morrow?"

"Yes; or it may not be for years; it is uncertain. Do not waste your life in anticipating them. We all must go through the same gate some day."

"The gate—yes! But beyond the gate—what is there?"

His eyes were on the doctor's face, full of doubt, almost of pain.

The two men were silent a moment.

"What is there?" Joyce repeated, harshly. "You are a member of a church—a Christian. I have no religious belief. Tell me, for the love of God, what is there beyond. If I may go to-morrow, what shall I find?"

"I do not know."

Joyce did not speak for awhile, and then gave a forced laugh.

"I need your help more for this than for my disease. I'd rather talk to you than to a clergyman. You are a shrewd man of the world and a good man. Sometimes I am greatly depressed, thinking of this darkness into which I am going. For thousands of years men have gone out into it, leaving their loved ones behind, and not one has sent back word to say how it fares with him—not one."

In the silence which followed the rain beat against the windows. There came a slight whimpering cry from without.

"You are an old man, doctor," said Joyce, turning quickly on him. "You are not far from the gate yourself. Are you not afraid of what may be beyond?"

"No," said the old man. "No, I am not afraid. May I ask you to look here?"

He rose and opened the door. Outside, in the dark hall, lay a little fox-terrier, drenched with rain. He was crouched on the floor, his eyes fixed on the closed door.

"This is my dog, a bright, affectionate little fellow. He has followed me through the storm and has been lying outside the door, knowing I am in this closed chamber. He never was here before. He did not know what was in this room. He did not care to know. I was in it, his master, whom he loves, who has cared for him. He was not afraid."

Joyce looked at the doctor keenly a moment before he spoke.

"You mean—"

"I mean that I am like poor Punch. I am not afraid of the dark room to which I am going. I do not ask to know what is there. I believe that my Lord and Master is there. In all these latter years of my life I have felt that he cared for me. My confidence has been such that I have been assured that in my hours of trial he has never failed me here. I sincerely believe he will not fail me yonder."

"But I—I do not know him."

"He knows you. I think I am authorized by the declarations of the Bible to say that his hand is stretched out to you. I think, too, that I can reverently ask you to take it. You can accept him as your guide and teacher, if

you will. That done in sincerity, you will not fear the gate, nor all that lies beyond."—Youth's Companion.

Encouragers.

In a story describing a country parish in Scotland mention is made of a church member who belonged to a band of "encouragers." He was an elderly man, who had heard many a sermon from many a preacher visiting the church to which he belonged, and he never left one of them go away without a word of encouragement, and what is sometimes quite as welcome, a hearty shake of the hand.

Now, there are different ways of encouraging a minister. Elderly people may do so by speaking well of his sermons, but this would hardly be becoming in those among his hearers who are not yet grown up. It is not for us all to speak; but we may all listen, and a really good listener—not one who simply sits still during the sermon, but one who pays attention to what is being said—is as much of an encourager as is one of those who praise.

It is only too often the case that young people who would very much resent being told that they haven't brains enough to understand what the teacher says in the school room, will say of themselves:

"Oh, it is of no use for us to try to listen to the sermon! It is intended for old folks, and we cannot understand half of it."

If, instead of wondering how much longer the sermon is going to last and wishing one could sleep sitting up, a young churchgoer would try as hard to understand what the preacher is saying as, on week-days, he or she tries to make sense out of long rules in grammar and arithmetic, the preacher would soon notice the difference in the expression of his listener's countenance, and begins to feel very much encouraged indeed.

We all have our troubles, and as school children feel when the answer to their sums don't correspond with those in the book, or when they find that they have completely forgotten a whole tense of the verb they were sure they had by heart, so does the preacher feel when he finds that he is not interesting the young people who have to sit still while he is in the pulpit.

When people talk to use out of church, ordinary visitors or those who happen to meet on the street, it would be considered impolite for us to show them by our looks that we are not paying attention to what they have to say, no matter how foolishly they might talk; there is far less excuse for us to treat with such discourtesy the speaker who is talking to us of the most important thing in the world—the way of salvation.—Classmate.

Catch the Falling Jewel.

A genuine conversion makes a man solicitous of the welfare of others, and eager for their salvation. This makes a large call on a man's wisdom and tact, and then the well-meant efforts of many young Christians to win others or to remonstrate with them about their ways, are not always marked by such insight. Some, from a too eager spirit of interference with others' spiritual welfare, after a few failures and rebuffs, fall into permanent discouragement.

Both extremes are to be avoided. We are to seek the good of others with patient tact, and also with gentle persistence. Better than rescue are warning and prevention. How often may a wise and loving word, spoken in the nick of time, stop a soul on the very verge of a fatal precipice!

George Eliot somewhere says that when the conscience of the race is developed, we shall run as eagerly to prevent a man's or a woman's fall as we should to save a beautiful mantelpiece ornament in danger of coming to the ground and being dashed to pieces. That will be when the constraining love of Christ has had its way in the hearts of His people.—London Christian.

One of the First Steps.

Seeing goes before doing. Every great and good work starts—as Christ's did in the Jordan, as Paul's did on the Damascus road—with a vision of opened heavens. The beginning of every great creation is in light. The business man who gains is the one who sees the possibilities of trade; the general who wins is the one who sees when and where and how to fight. An old-time governor of one of our American states, a man of great practical good sense, though of but little education, said, after the accomplishment of an especially difficult part of his administrative labors,—and his word has become almost a proverb among his people,—"I seen my duty, and I done it." His state has recognized that the inaccuracy of his grammar was

atoned for by the impeccability and the efficiency of his procedure. First to see, then to do,—that is the way of good workmanship forever. Vision is as needful as good tools or bread and butter. We can all, then, raise for ourselves the brand man's petition, "Lord, open thou mine eyes," that we may see.—Sunday-school Times.

The Atmosphere We Live In.

A Flemish physician planted in a pot of earth weighing two hundred pounds a willow branch weighing five pounds. He kept the plant well watered, and in five years the willow had gained one hundred and sixty-four pounds in weight, while the earth in the pot had lost only two ounces. Van Helmont inferred that the plant's growth was due only to the water which had been supplied. Modern botanical science proves that the gain was in a great measure due to the carbon absorbed from the air. So it is true that strong spiritual characters are built up out of the spiritual atmosphere in which they live.

The willow needed the earth to support its roots. It needed the water. It needed the sunshine. It needed the atmosphere. Deprived of any of these elements, it would have failed to grow, if not to live. So we need a soil to grow in, which is the Word. We need the water of life, the Holy Spirit, and we need the Sun of righteousness, and also the atmosphere of Christian sympathy.—Herald and Presbyter.

OPPORTUNITY.—In one of the old Greek cities there stood long ago, a statue. Every trace of it has vanished now. But there is still in existence an epigram which gives us an excellent description of it; and, as we read the words, we can surely discover the lesson which those wise old Greeks meant that the statue should teach to every passer-by.

The epigram is in the form of a conversation between a traveller and the statue:

"What is thy name, O statue?"

"I am called Opportunity."

"Who made thee?"

"Lysippus."

"Why art thou on thy toes?"

"To show that I stay but a moment."

"Why hast thou wings on thy feet?"

"To show how quickly I pass by."

"But why is thy hair so long on thy forehead?"

"That men may seize me when they meet me."

"Why, then, is thy head so bald behind?"

"To show that when I have once passed I cannot be caught."—Christian Press.

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SKETCHISM.—This is unhappily an age of skepticism, but there is one point upon which persons acquainted with the subject agree, namely, that Dr. Thomas' Eclectic Oil is a medicine which can be relied upon to cure a cough, remove pain, heal sores of various kinds, and benefit any inflamed portion of the body to which it is applied.

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