

Our World Is but a School.

BY GAZELLE STEVENS SHARP.

Why are so many things in life
So very hard to bear?
Why does so much each day arise
To sorely vex,
Deeply perplex,
And claim our utmost care?

Why so much that we long to know,
But cannot understand?
Questions of deep moment that rise
To harass us,
Embarrass us,
Problems on every hand?

While thus I mused in weary frame
My daughter came from school
With many a plaint of tasks assigned
That hurried her,
And worried her,
Of hard, perplexing rule.

I stopped her murmurs with a kiss,
Smiled at her troubled glance.
"If all the work they give at school
Was old to you,
Easy to do,
How would you then advance?"

"You need hard tasks to try your powers,
Your utmost skill to prove;
Some lesson new for every day.
'Tis better so,
'Tis thus you grow,
Thus do you onward move."

We're children of a larger growth,
Our world is but a school;
The answer to her childish plaint—
Of reason why,
Of purpose high
In each perplexing rule—

Gave also answer to my heart
And stilled its deep unrest.
The very things that hardest seem
Are wisely sent,
With kind intent,
To help us in our quest.

For we grow only as we strive;
By effort power's obtained.
From each attempt to overcome
Is gathered strength,
Until at length
The longed-for heights are gained.
—Chris. Advocate.

Are Ministers Workers?

There is no doubt that there are plenty of people ready to answer that question off-hand with a very emphatic negative. It is an old, and somewhat stale, and still much-used joke that points to the minister's work as worthy of such a strenuous appellation only as a matter of courtesy, and to the minister's life as one of the most decided "snaps" going. So long as these sentiments are kept within the limits of pleasant raillery there is no offence to be taken and little harm done. But we have frequently heard them expressed with a deal of earnestness, and bitterness and cynicism as well, and the result has been, we fancy, exceedingly harmful in many ways.

It would seem that there are few people comprehensive and cosmopolitan enough in their feelings and sympathies to have a very just appreciation of the life and labors of any one in an entirely different sphere from their own. Time and again this fact has told against a proper understanding of the minister's work. The man who works with his hands sees his minister dressed every day in his "Sunday clothes," and with his hands unsoiled, and he says to himself, Surely that must be an easier life than mine. The man of business sees him freed from the peculiar cares and anxieties that harass himself and it is so easy to think that the other's life is one of great immunity. And likewise the professional man fancies that his minister knows nothing of the competitions and struggles and responsibilities that fall to his lot. But there are some people in all these spheres of life who, as well as the minister himself, believe that that calling carries with it responsibilities and duties, and makes demands upon, and exhausts, the vital forces of our life to as great an extent at least as any other.

The minister of the Gospel in so far as he is worthy of the name, is no idler, or trifler, or mere worker upon the fringe of things; but is in the very thick of life's conflict, bearing its burdens, realizing its duties, facing its responsibilities in the full vigor of his manhood, and the full strength of a divinely-inspired purpose. He knows what work is, hard, exhausting, wearying work.

There are some people still who think that the preaching of a sermon is one of the easiest things in the world—that is, of course, admitting that you have certain qualifications for it. We have even heard some ministers say that preaching never tired them, that they have never known anything of a "blue Monday." There are wonderful differences in constitutions, of course, but we fail to see how any man can stand up before the people in the solemn hush of God's house to tell his message, and have a true conception of what it is he is doing, and not give of his very life in the doing of it. It is glorious, blessed work, it is true, but it is work just the same.

And no one who has never done it

can have an idea of what it means to call upon a dozen or so families in the course of a day, enter into all the joys and sorrows, keeping uppermost all the while the one supreme purpose. It is work that any man should thank God for being allowed to do, but it is work that tires just the same. We think that the minister in these and very many other ways is worthy of that most honorable of all titles.

It still remains to be said, however, that there are few callings more beset with danger along this line than the minister's. His work may be done in a perfunctory way, and he may idle away much precious time, and who is to bring him to task? His obligation of faithfulness is a matter resting between his own soul and his God. Of all men in the world he needs a high sense of duty. He needs often to ask himself, Am I in that glorious company of which the Master speaks, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work?" —Chris. Guardian.

What Is The Matter With The Church?

REV. C. E. HUNT.

1. Spiritual preaching. Some churches are wondering why their preacher does not have more life and spiritual power in his preaching. It may be they have never thought to pray for him, or his sermon, and yet they expect him to be spiritual, and to spiritualize the whole church. If you want the preacher to have more spiritual life in his preaching, put more spiritual life into your praying and singing. Encourage the preacher occasionally by telling him of something that he has said that has helped you in your spiritual life. Don't be afraid of spoiling him. Many a preacher has gone through life and died without knowing whether his work was appreciated or not. Do not wait until he is dead and gone to tell how much good he has done, but tell it while he is living; tell it so he can hear it, and see if he does not preach better. It will give him new courage. The Bible says, "Like people, like priests." If that be true, a spiritual congregation will breathe into the sermon a higher type of spirituality.

2. Sabbath desecration. In some communities there is a tendency to disobey the laws of God and man. Stores, barber shops, and meat shops are kept open on Sunday the same as any other day of the week. What is worse, some church-members patronize these places on Sunday. Many young men are kept away from Sunday school and preaching because these places are allowed to be open, giving them a place to loaf. Just why men and women who profess to be followers of Christ, can trample under foot the law of God and still claim religion, is hard to understand.

God demands one-seventh of our time, and it is our duty as professors of Christian religion to find our way to the sanctuary every Sabbath. I do not see how any one can live under the sound of the church bell and never go to church. It is impossible for us to live as Christians and refuse or neglect the church services.

3. Neglect of prayer-meeting. There is a growing tendency in the church to neglect the prayer-meeting. Churches with large memberships, and only a few that will attend the prayer-meeting. Many churches have no prayer-meeting at all. Is it any wonder that the church is not more spiritual? Is it any wonder that souls are not converted and added to the church? Wherever you find a church that attends the prayer-meeting, you will find a class that is spiritually alive. Our fathers and mothers loved the prayer-meeting. They went, they prayed, they sang, and shouted, and as a result of their consecrations sinners were convicted mourners converted, and saints shouted the high praises of him who had so wonderfully blessed them. No difference how dark the night or how deep the mud, the prayer-meeting was well attended. Whenever the church comes back to the old landmarks of waiting and praying for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and power, then we will have the same blessed meetings that our fathers and mothers enjoyed.

4. A lack of unity. "When the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place." There was the best of feelings between John and Peter. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus were on the very best of terms; in fact, there was that feeling of oneness and unity that ought to characterize the church of Christ everywhere. But it is a lamentable fact that in many of our local churches there are divisions and feelings of envy and hatred among the members. Brother John and Brother Joe do not have much to do with one another. Sister Jane and Sister Alice have not spoken to one another for a long time, and yet they all claim to be religious. These things ought not to

be. Love and union should reign in every church. Let us imitate the spirit of our blessed Lord on the cross, as he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." —Rel. Telescope.

Divine Deliverance.

BY THE REV. C. P. DITMARS.

It is a good thing to have a circle of kind, loving earthly friends about us, but it is a better thing to have the Divine Friend. In the hours of trouble earthly friends may sympathize with us, may manifest their love by their presence or their word, but they are not always able to deliver us. Usually they are as helpless and powerless as ourselves, but the Divine Friend is never helpless, and according to His wisdom and grace he pledges us that all the deliverance, which he sees best, shall be given us. The believer passes through the waters of trial, but they shall not overflow him. He may walk through the fires of affliction, but the flames shall take no vital hold on his life. Some of the worldly dross and beauty may be consumed, but the real life shall only be advanced by that.

Hear what Paul says of this wonderful staying, living power of God's deliverance during his arduous and dangerous work of an apostle: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in us." So God keeps the light of his love ever shining upon his own in the darkest valleys and along the roughest ways of life.

Take Joseph as an illustration. His boyhood was bright enough. A loved favorite, clad in robes of rich colors, full of vigorous young life, having a heart that was early at peace with God. Then what a storm of trouble suddenly broke over him, and how long it lasted. Hated by his brethren, cast in a pit as though abandoned to death, taken up again and sold to Egyptian slavery. By his very faithfulness and manliness he rose to places of honor and trust. But again a storm of temptation and reverses fell upon him, and though he was not overcome by it, it was followed by later accusation and imprisonment that seemed to be the doom of his life. The waters seem to have almost gone over Joseph. But suddenly the darkness lifts. A divine hand brushes the clouds away and now upon this tried and disciplined child of God the sun shines down to the very end of his days. How clearly can we read here that comforting lesson, "All things shall work together for good to them who love God." All the years of slavery and imprisonment were not wasted. In them the gold of true character was refined, and the dreamer became fit to be a ruler of men. By obedience as a slave Joseph was made to become a prince with power.

Now perhaps in not as intense a degree yet in much the same way God deals with many of us. Bodily pain and affliction becomes the key to a more earnest and thoughtful life. Some calamity falls on our cherished and trusted earthly estate and it opens the door to a more real and abiding prosperity. Sorrow and loss often deepen and establish Christian character. So it is "good for us that we have been afflicted." But let us not forget that through it all faith on our part is necessary. We must lay hold of God by faith and hold fast. His promise is, "According to your faith be it unto you." Only believe and keep on believing, and in all your trials, disappointments, bereavements, heart burdens and soul conflicts, yes, even in the solemn hour of death you shall have the presence of the Divine Friend with you and shall experience his delivering power.

"Though clouds may surround us, our God is our light;
Though storms rage around us, our God is our might;
So faint, yet pursuing, still onward we come;
The Lord is our Leader, and heaven is our home."
—Chris. Intelligencer.

Communion With God.

"How little we yet know concerning the nature, the privilege and the joy of prayer! As disciples of the great Teacher we are in the school of prayer, but, also, what dull scholars we are! We do not thank enough with petition. We should make the book of Psalms a study—a devout study. Praise, thanksgiving, adoration are mingled freely with prayer and supplication. We come to the throne of grace empty-handed. The inspired exhortation is: "Bring an offering and come unto his courts." We should come laden with gifts—gift of gratitude and love. And yet, as someone has said, there are multitudes who never go to God except for favors,

who never approach him but as supplicants. Their prayers are better than no prayers, for the infinite mercy is unwearied by our sordidness and weakness; but how incalculable much is lost by failure to recognize prayer is the opportunity for communion, as of sons with the loving father—for absorption, dazing however brief a space, into the divine nature, whence to emerge with spirits chastened, purified unburdened!

Read and study and enter into the very spirit and life of the matchless prayer of our Lord, his high-priestly prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel. In that we get close to the heart of Jesus. We learn what "fellowship with the Father and with his Son" is. And in that fellowship there is joy which the world knows nothing of. It is a "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The highest form of prayer is, not craving for blessings, but communion with God. "O come, let us worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!" —Christian Uplook.

Sanctifying Power of Praise.

A merchant returned home one evening and exclaimed: "I've lost all; everything is gone." It was a bitter blow to the wife, who stood before him in silent sadness. Ruined! It is a terrible word to have to speak. But his little daughter throwing her arms around his neck, said, in her sweet simplicity, "Why, papa, you have me left, and mamma, too." The strong man wept.

There is always something left; something and God. "He abideth of old." Always is there room for praise.

We hear a great deal about the sanctifying power of sorrow; and it is a great truth to live by. We need to hear more about the sanctifying power of praise; there is mightier truth still to live by. In what wrong proportions we look at things. We wish our brightest hours would last always. No, no! That would never do. They last long enough, as a rule. Joy wears as well as sorrow. An abiding rapture, who could bear? Not one of us. Hold the rose too long and you will kill it. Better drop it than see it die in your hot hand. We can have too much of good things. A month's unbroken sunshine and we long for rain.

I thank Thee, Lord, that all my joy
Is touched with pain;
That shadows fall on brightest hours;
That thorns remain;
So that earth's bliss may be my guide
And not my chain.
—Baptist Commonwealth.

Coughing All Night.

It's this night coughing that breaks us down, keeping us awake most of the time, and annoying everybody in the house. Lots of people don't begin to cough until they go to bed. It gets to be so that retiring for the night is an empty form, for they cannot rest.

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The Kingdom Within

"The kingdom of God is within you," saith the Lord. Turn thee with thy whole heart unto the Lord and forsake this world, and thy soul shall find rest. Learn to give thyself to things inward, and thou shalt perceive the kingdom of God to be come in thee.

"For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," which is not given to the unholy.

Christ will come unto thee and show thee His own consolation, if thou prepare for him a worthy mansion within thee.

He is all glorious and beautiful within, and there shall He have pleasure. The inward man He often visiteth; and bath with him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceeding wonderful. O faithful soul, make ready thy heart for this Bridegroom, that He may vouchsafe to come unto thee and to dwell within thee.

For thus saith He: "If any man love Me, he will keep my words, and we will come unto him, and will make our abode with him."

When thou hast Christ thou art rich and hast enough.

He will be thy faithful and provident helper in all things, so as thou shalt not need to trust in men.—Thomas a Kempis.

Influence.

A very characteristic story is told of Mr. Spurgeon, that when an independent young woman objected to assenting to those questions in the marriage service which implied the superiority, and authority of the man over the woman, he said to her in a fatherly way: "Come, now let him be the head, and do you be the neck, and turn him which way you please."

This is a good illustration of the supreme potency of influence. Merely nominal precedence or authority does not amount to much. Almost every head has a neck which can turn it. How often the wife proves to be the ruling directing spirit of a household, instead of the husband and father! Who has not known organizations in which the real controlling power was wielded by some member or members not officially organized? The essential thing to seek is the power of influence—not so much the headship as the neckship of affairs. Anybody can be figurehead, provided he gets a chance in that capacity. But it takes genuine merit and faculty to be what is called "a controlling spirit." Let no mean, petty spirit of envy actuate us in our dealings with others. Position, outward honor, need not, and very often does not, mean real power, real supremacy. That belongs to influence—the quiet subtle force which moves so-called authority, as the neck of a man moves his head.

Death to a good man is but passing through a dark entry out of one little dusky room in his Father's house into another that is fair and large, light-some and glorious.—Adam Clarke.

Acknowledgment of the goodness of God is a part of every true prayer, and as we utter our thanksgiving, both for what we have always known as blessings, and for what we did not once realize to be such but are now understanding more completely, the gratitude for the past brings with it a calm and loving committal of the future to Him who has guided us all the way from the beginning.—Timothy Dwight

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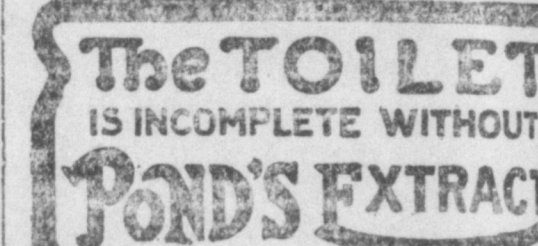


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