

Our Contributors.

BUILDING A CHRISTIAN.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D.D.

"I never let fools or bairns see my work until it is done," said a famous Scotch painter; he knew that no production of human art could be rightly judged until it was completed. I remember that when I first saw Cologne Cathedral nearly fifty years ago it had a stumpy and unimpressive appearance, for it was towerless. The next time I saw the edifice it was disfigured by scaffolding on which workmen were busy. But when, in the summer of 1894, I beheld the completed towers in their flashing splendour, I felt that it was a mighty and magnificent poem written in marble.

That illustrates the way in which the Master builds a true Christian. The Bible declares that the Christian is "Christ's workmanship created anew unto good works." Anyone who looked at a company of church members in a prayer meeting or at a sacramental table might say that some of them were quite imperfect specimens of workmanship, as he could testify from intimate acquaintance. Very true; but if that same person wished to purchase a melodeon he would not go into the manufactory where the different parts were being fashioned; he would go into the salesroom and inspect the completed instrument.

This world is the great work-shop in which Jesus Christ by his Spirit constructs Christian character. "Ye are God's building" wrote the Apostle Paul to his brethren at Corinth. Of himself he wrote at another time, "Not as though I have already attained, either were already perfect." He was still in the hand of his divine and loving architect. The scaffoldings were not yet taken down, and the work of grace was not yet completed.

It is easy to discover some flaws in even the best men and women; but the critic must consider what materials our Master has to work with in frail and fallen human nature, so often disfigured and defaced by innate depravity. Napoleon used to say that "he had to make his marshals out of mud." Certainly no power less than that of the Holy Spirit could have constructed such a conscientious and effective Christian as John Newton out of so hardened and desperate a sinner. A very eloquent and spiritually-minded minister once said to me, "before I was converted I wonder how anyone could live in the house with me."

During my forty-four years of pastorates, when I received converts into the church, I often recognized the fact that one candidate for membership had been reared in a frivolous and worldly family—and another had a naturally violent temper—and another was constitutionally timid and irresolute—and still another had to contend with hereditary sensualities of temperament or practice. Some of the over-hasty and headlong had to be

held back and tested, and some desponding doubters had to be encouraged. A study of the experience of our blessed Lord in building twelve disciples out of the material that came to his hands is full of solemn suggestion, and one of those twelve tumbled into ruin under the very eyes of the Master Builder!

Character building is like cathedral building—a gradual process. No Christian is born full grown, else there would be no sense in divine injunctions to "grow in grace" and to "press towards the goal of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The corner stone of every truly regenerated character is the Lord Jesus; other foundation can no one build on without risking a wreck in this world and eternal ruin in the next world. The first act of saving faith is the joining of the new convert to the atoning Saviour. Then upon that solid foundation must be added the courage, the meekness, the patience, the conscientiousness, the honesty, the loving-kindness and the other graces that make godliness. Let no young beginner be disheartened. Oaks do not grow like holly-hocks. A solid Christian character cannot be reared in a day—nor is it to be done simply by Sabbath service or by sacraments. Some poor pumice-stone has to be thrown out, and not a little bad timber rejected in spite of the varnish on it.

The Bible is the only plumb-line to build by and it must be used constantly. All the showy ornamentation that a man can put on his edifice amounts to nothing, if his walls are not perpendicular. Sometimes we see a flimsy structure whose bulging walls are shored up by props and skids to keep them from tumbling into the street. I am afraid that there are thousands of reputations in trade, in politics, in social life, and even in church life that are shored up by various devices. No Christian can defy God's inexorable law of gravitation. It is a mere question of time how soon every character will "fall in," if it is not based on the rock, and built according to Jesus Christ's plumb-line. It may go down in this world; it is sure to go down in the next. Let everyone, therefore, take heed how he or she buildeth; for the last great day will test the work, of what sort it is.

Finally, let us all bear in mind that if we are Christ's workmanship, we must let our wise and loving Master take his own way. We must allow him to use his own tools. Oh, how much cutting and chiselling we often need! How keen, too, and sharp is the chisel which he sometimes uses! The sound of his hammers is constantly heard; and with it are also heard the wondering cries of some sufferer who exclaims, "Why art Thou applying to me the file, the saw and the hammers?" Be still and know that whom he loveth he chasteneth! If we are Christ's building,

then let him fashion us according to his divine ideal of beauty, at whatever cost to our selfishness or pride, or indolence, or vainglory. Christ working in us, and upon us—and we working with Christ and for him—that is the process that produces such structures as he will present before his Father and the holy angels.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

THE IMPERIAL SERVICE ORDER.

The Imperial Service Order—of which a number of companions have recently been designated, one of them being Auditor General Beek of Fredericton—is a new order, instituted last year by King Edward. The *Globe* describes it: It is for members of the civil service of the Empire, to be conferred after long and meritorious service. It consists of the Sovereign, the Prince of Wales, and such companions as the Sovereign shall appoint, after a recommendation from a secretary of state. Only members of the administrative or clerical branches of the civil service are eligible as companions, and their number must not exceed 425, of whom 250 are to belong to the home civil service, and 175 to the civil services of the colonies and protectorates. Appointments must be made to civil servants who are at least twenty-five years in the employ (or, in unhealthy colonies, nineteen years), or for eminently meritorious service. The decoration, which is to be worn on the left breast, is a badge or medallion of gold and enamel, bearing on one side the Imperial and Royal Cypher, and on the reverse "For Faithful Service," both executed in dark blue enamel on a plaque of gold, surrounded by a wreath of laurel surmounted by the Imperial Crown. Companions of the order may add the letters I.S.O. after their names.

AN ANNIVERSARY.—Rev. O. N. Mott writes of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Scribner, Kars, K. Co., on the 1st inst. About one hundred friends assembled and it was a pleasant time. Tea was served, and on behalf of those present, Mr. Myles Jenkins, and Mr. Herbert Jones presented the old folks with \$52.50 and some presents valued at \$7.50. Speeches were made by Rev. O. N. Mott, Mrs. Scribner, and Messrs. John Scribner and Alex. Morrell; and there was an appropriate recitation by Mr. Willie Jones on the fiftieth anniversary of married life. "God be with you," etc., was sung, there was prayer by the pastor, and the national anthem closed a pleasant evening.

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