

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

W. Edmund Smith

There is a little rhyme that runs like this; "A little nonsense now and then is relished by the best of men". Pity the man who has no sense of humor and cannot enjoy a hearty laugh at comical situations which may happen to himself or to others. But it is always better to laugh with people than to laugh at them.

Abraham Lincoln was another story teller, but he told his stories, generally, not merely for the purpose of raising a great laugh but to clinch an argument. When we look at his countenance as it appears in all of his likenesses, we think of him, not as one given to levity, but as a man of sorrows, bearing a heavy load. In the throes of that awful Civil war the burden was often almost unbearable. His great heart felt for homes in the North and the South that were being ravished by the conflict. In conference with his cabinet, there were often differences of opinion and tense situations. It was then that Mr. Lincoln would tell some story most apropos to the situation, breaking the spell, raising a laugh and bring all to see the President's viewpoint.

Even Mr. Wesley had a sense of humor. He was not given to telling foolish stories, but he was quick at repartee. One day he was confronted in a narrow path, by a proud fop named Beau Nash. The dude ran face up to the great man and snarled contemptuously, "I never get out of the way of a fool." "Oh", said Mr. Wesley, smilingly, "I always do," and he stepped aside to let the fop go by.

Once, Thomas Walsh, the wonderful Irishman, saved from Roman Catholicism, and was never known to laugh after he was saved, who died at the age of twenty-eight and was called by Mr. Wesley the finest Hebrew scholar he had ever met, reproved Mr. Wesley for trying to make him laugh. It might have been better had that melancholy but most devoted and holy man relaxed a little at times, not to revel in comic strips, or to give over to matching story with story, just to see who could make the biggest ha! ha! but to spice in some humor which can give point even to great preaching.

But pity the person who gives over to cultivate the art of making people laugh by funny stories. Probably no class of men are more tempted to story-telling than are preachers when they come together for relaxation. I heard an evangelist at a weak holiness camp meeting, tell the audience that he enjoyed working with his colleague in the meeting; that they had had fine times together exchanging stories. That may have accounted for there being so little power in the messages and little conviction on the people.

Rev. Alfred Cookman, who was called by Dr. Talmage the holiest man he had ever met, lost the blessing once by falling in with some fellow preachers at a Methodist conference, matching stories with them, failing to heed the checks of the Spirit and going home feeling that the dove of peace had flown from his heart. He regained the blessing, and became one of the noblest men that blessed the early holiness movement. He learned a lesson which he did not have to learn over again.

We have to watch lest the very exhilaration of spiritual joy, which is the wine of the kingdom, be diluted with the water of light, and even foolish conversation. I heard a lady say that her husband employed a big, jolly brother as an evangelist, and that he would preach wonderfully on holiness and get blessed, and then come home and give over to telling of all

the comical situations he could recall, adding funny stories to raise a laugh, and then kneeling to pray in an atmosphere in which the Spirit had been grieved. Of one such preacher, a friend said, "When you are in the pulpit I think you ought never to be out; when you are out of the pulpit I think you ought never to be in." There was such a contrast between his spirit in and out of the pulpit.

I remember a preacher in the great conference, in which I was a little member. He filled the higher grade pulpits that were measured by financial remuneration. He was noted as a story-teller. He told them to garage men and when they saw him coming they would say, "We wonder what new story the domine has today. And he generally had a new one. Once in a while one of the boys would come back at him with a story which while not smutty in verbiage, nevertheless had a smutty implication. When the climax was reached they watched to see the reaction on the preacher's countenance. Even when he did not laugh outright, often he could not suppress a smile. When a preacher falls in with the spirit of the worldly crowd he cannot reprove when stories off color are told.

I heard a sister say of a brother preacher, "He was in our home for nearly two hours and kept us convulsed with laughter most of the time." I can well believe that if he knelt to pray, after such a success at fun-making, it was with a lean and a condemned heart, an experience to which, sad to say, the writer is not a stranger.

How young people, especially those in school, often give place to the adversary when they get together in a student's room to have a social time. If a young girl or boy can keep a real Holy Ghost experience at a holiness college he or she can keep it anywhere. And yet they go there thinking they can be kept by their environment. When all are in sympathy with holiness they are not as watchful as when they feel they are in enemy's territory, or amongst those who are eyeing them critically. What shall we think of such schools when a mother told an audience that her son had many black and blue spots on his body as a result of hazing in a college organized for the promotion of holiness! and she told it rather exulting in the fact than condemning it. "He could take it," she said; and of course then pass it to the next class coming on. I was not surprised at such an attitude, for her husband, the evangelist in the meeting, in which she was the singer, told of a preacher in whose church there had been a good revival in which a couple of fine stalwart young men were saved. The preacher said to them, "Now boys you are done with foot-ball and base-ball, you are going to be Christians." The evangelist laughed at that attitude. There were few seekers in that meeting.

As far as batting a ball around or kicking it around for relaxation is concerned, it may be beneficial to health; but we have yet to see any boy who has made spiritual progress while he stuck to the local ball team. What I write may seem humorous to some folks and make them laugh more than a funny story. Yes, and they have called me an old crack pot.

In a church I served, there was a fine young fellow who was a star player in the local ball club. He was also a member of the town band. His father was proud of him, and loved to see him hit a home-run against a visiting ball-team. That young man got converted and then sanctified. I never advised him to leave the ball-team or the band. He soon saw what he

had to do under the guidance of the Spirit. Against his father's protest, he gave up base-ball and the band and stood true to God. That was more than forty years ago. He today is a grandfather, lives in a little city near Syracuse, N. Y., where he has held a fine position in an office for many years. But best of all he is superintendent of a Sunday school in a holiness church. He has had a happy and useful life. His godless father has been dead for years. I am expecting to visit our brother the last of December and may preach in his church.

Thank God for the joy of real living! They may call us kill-joys. But life is real and life is earnest. If we walk in the Spirit we shall be saved from, not only the actually sinful things, but also from those things that sap spiritual vitality, and rob the soul of its strength and power, which comes through the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost.

LETTERS FROM OUR PASTORS

North Head, N. B.

Dear Highway:

May we have a few lines to give a brief report of our recent series of meetings with Rev. Geo. Archibald of Springhill, N. S.

It was a short meeting. We began Nov. 10th, the night we arrived home from Woodstock. We joined our evangelist in Saint John and enjoyed the trip together. The closing service was Monday night, the 22nd, but short and all as the service was, a great uplifting was received by the church, everyone testifying to having been wonderfully blessed by our brother's ministry. His sermons and illustrations will be remembered a long time, both by pastor and people, and we gladly recommend him to any of our brethren wanting an evangelist. While with us he endeared himself to the children with his stories of Africa, and preached at the "Youth for Christ" both Saturday nights. One message was illustrated by slides of Africa.

There were requests for prayer, one sought, and testified to Sanctification, and at one of the Saturday night meetings seven young people went forward stating they were open to God's leadings, and would be ready to go wherever He called them. We believe there will be more fruit as a result of these meetings, and we are looking forward to greater days of victory.

The fall has been a busy one. We just finished a garage for the pastor's car, and now a new wood shed is being erected at the rear of the church. In the spring repairs are to be made on the church steeple. We find the people here very co-operative, and pray God's best for them in everything.

May the God of all Grace be with all The Highway readers.

Yours for Holiness

J. A. and MRS. OWENS

REAL COURAGE

It requires much courage to be alone with God. It is then that all of self, all subtle egotism, is searched and hunted out of the soul. It cannot live in His presence. The praise of men becomes as dust beneath the feet, and the soul trembles even to receive any honor of men, or to be recognized in this world as of any worth."—Amy Carmichael.