

A Critical Case.

How critical the position of a serious, reflecting sinner! He stands upon the summit of a hill, pondering which side he will descend. It is said that the waters of the Missouri and Columbia rivers originate within a few yards of each other, upon the top of the Rocky mountains. As the rain descends upon that lofty point, how slight a breath of air from east or west will waft the drops to one side or the other; but when they have commenced their downward course upon the mountain side, how hard to arrest their progress. They mingle with other streams, dashing and foaming over precipices, and through dark ravines, till they are merged in the deep current of a mighty river, rolling with resistless power towards the ocean. Those upon the west side are borne out to be rocked upon the ever-heaving bosom of the broad and calm Pacific. Those upon the east, are hurled into the raging billows of the stormy Atlantic, to be made the sport of a thousand tempests. At their commencement, how near and how much alike; but in their end how widely separated!

Impenitent friend, in whose bosom a faithful monitor is now heard, saying, "Listen to the voice of wisdom; enter, while you may, the gate of life," it may be that you now stand upon the top of the mountain. On the one side of you, far out of sight, lies the ocean of God's love, with which the river of life is connected—an ocean shoreless, cloudless, pacific; on the other side, the foaming billows of his wrath, equally shoreless, sunless, tempestuous; and a muddy stream rushes from your feet into that bottomless abyss. A breath may convey you now to one of these streams or the other. A heedless word, a look, a laugh, a sneer, an amusement, a trifling book, a business call, may waft you to the declivity towards that boisterous ocean. A tear, a sigh, a kind word, a pressure of the hand of Christian sympathy, a verse of the Bible, a page of pious reading, under the blessing of the Spirit, may bear you to the other side. O, beware, for your soul's sake beware, to what influences you yield at this moment. Decide for God and heaven while you may. Embark upon that river of life, and drink of its soul-refreshing waters. Linger not on that fearful summit, where one step may plunge you into that tide whose dark waters will bear you to a hopeless, returnless distance from God, from peace, from heaven!

And how responsible the position of those associated with a sinner at these crises of his being. The weight of a finger may push him over the brink of endless woe. A word, an act, a look of Christian solicitude, may win him to glory and to God. At such a moment how cautiously should the Christian guard his life, his tongue, his heart, that no movement of his may weaken the claims of God upon the sinner's conscience. How agonizing to the Christian will be the reflection, "My son, my daughter, came to the open door of heaven, and were just ready to enter in; but my levity, or worldliness, or silence, discouraged them. They have passed by, and that door is shut for ever!" "My impenitent husband, or friend, was almost persuaded; he seemed dejected and reserved, and I attempted to cheer him, but not with pious counsel and tears. He has passed the crisis, and is shut out of the kingdom of God!"

Too Late!

I once saw a man, upon whose head had beaten almost eighty winters, rise in a large congregation to request the people of God to pray for him. Never shall I forget the scene. There he stood covered with the locks which time had whitened, leaning upon the top of his staff. He felt that he was a sinner. His locks had whitened in the service of Satan. With a trembling voice and quivering lip he said, "I wish to go to Jesus; but I fear it is too late!" A thrill ran through the assembly. Too late! An aged sinner tottering upon the brink of eternity, with a world of glory yet to be lost or won! Aged friend, is it too late for you? Has the heavenly messenger been grieved for the last time, and left you like the shattered oak of the plain, to ripen in the beams of the sun for the consuming flames? Oh, turn your trembling footsteps to Calvary; there is mercy yet in store for thee. Hasten to that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Linger not for a more convenient season.—Fall into the hands of mercy. Then shalt thou lean upon the top of thy staff and worship,—then shalt thou go down into the dark valley of the shadow of death, leaning upon the arm of Jesus.

The Arrow sent back to the Archer.

Here is a man who prides himself upon his justice and honesty. He has never failed to fulfil his pecuniary obligations. He is scrupulous to a proverb on this point. He exults that his integrity is known and read of all men. He professes himself the man who gives to all men their dues. And, not being himself of the disciples, it is in him to give them the lash now and then, sometimes snapper and all, for not coming up to their professions.

No ointment of mine shall assuage the smart of his rebukes when they are deserved. But let us see if the war cannot be carried into his own camp. Does he himself come up to his own profession of being strictly honest and upright? Does he pay all the debts he owes, and faithfully discharge every obligation? If he were to pay the most of his debts, and willfully neglect some, or even one of his creditors, could we call him honest? And especially, if while he paid all his small obligations, he should refuse to pay a farthing to the chief creditor, to whom he owed more than to all the rest, would he be honest?

Now the fact is, that this man, not being a Christian man, has refused up to this hour to pay the most just and important debt he ever owed. All inferior demands he has been willing to meet, but the great one he steadily denies. He owes the greatest and best Being in the universe. He owes him supreme love for all the excellence of that Being's character, and all the good he has been receiving at his hand. But he has never paid the smallest fraction of that debt.

And what aggravates the wrong is, that this Great Creditor has seen this debtor ready and prompt to pay every other creditor, he has heard his thousand times repeated boast of the fact, that he does pay all he owes in every other direction; and yet, his own debt, infinitely greater than all others, has never been paid.

At the same time the debt has never been denied—nay, always and most promptly acknowledged; and the purpose expressed of sometime or other paying it. But it has not been paid.

Now, this man professes to be honest and just; you could not offend him more than to intimate the contrary. Yet nothing can be plainer than that he is as unjust a man as there is living. He does not pay his debts. If he pays some of them, yet he does not pay the most important. The debt that ought to have precedence of all others in his regard; the one that ought to press upon his conscience, with overwhelming power—that debt stands the lowest on his scale. All others are promptly paid. But of this great debt not a farthing has been paid, and nothing done about it save the reiteration of constantly broken promises, vows to pay, the more provoking as they are constantly disregarded.

Now, this man has always regarded himself as a just and honest man; he has prided himself on this commanding feature of his character. And, on the narrow scale of pecuniary obligations to his fellow men, he may be called honest. But in the noblest sense of that word, in the sense of all others the most important to a rational and accountable being, in that sense he is not honest—he is not just.

Now, it is certainly true of him he professes one thing and does another. I do not call him a hypocrite in the sense in which many are so. But in his estimation of justice and honesty, he has no right to leave out of sight the unliquidated claims of God—no right to call himself just while he refuses to pay the great debt he owes of love to God—no right to self-complacency as though he had full claim to the honor of a truly honest man.

If he is just in one direction toward man he is not in another toward God. If minor claims are met, the mightiest and most important of all are denied. If a human tribunal will acquit him of injustice, yet another and one infinitely higher does not!

"Go Forward."

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." This is the voice of Jehovah to his people. He uttered it at the Red Sea, when they stood trembling on the shore. He uttered it on the borders of Canaan, when the Hebrews halted through fear of the devoted nations who resisted them. He utters it to the church, when staying her hand through indolence or fear, she suffers the enemy to get the advantage. He utters it to every fearful disciple, to every reluctant Christian, to every self-indulgent believer—to the whole

Israel of God. Go toward, go forward!—Press on in the path of duty, of toil, of triumph. Success is sure to the obedient and persevering.

Go forward, O Israel, to enjoy your consolations. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." Advance, ye favorites of heaven's King, and receive new tokens of his confidence and love.

Go forward to be more holy. Your Redeemer gave himself for you, that he might present you to himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing."

Go forward to duty. Ye are labourers together with God. By your hands will he rear the walls of Zion. Ye are called to be reapers in the vineyard. Go ye also into the field, and fear not but that a work and a reward await you.

Go forward to death. The Lord told Moses to go up on Nebo's summit and die: and the aged patriot goes calm and believing. He views the land of promise as if it were a setting sun, to rise to-morrow in new glory. He is obedient unto death. He fears not, for the God of his fathers is there, the same who met Abraham at the place which he named Jehovah Jirah. God is there to close his eyes in death, and then, attended by ministering angels, to commit him to the tomb. Go forward, fellow Christians, and meet the duty of dying as firmly as you have met other duties. For with faith and courage, you are as sure of victory there as anywhere. In the last great struggle, you will sing, and if not you, your friends for you, "thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ."

We must go forward, or we shall go backward. We must have revivals or the world will devour our churches—we must save and purify the flood-tide of immigration, or it will engulf us—we must go forward to duty, to toil, to victory, or Egypt will soon ride over us in triumph. *Israel, go forward.*—[N. Y. Observer.]

A Fallacy.

It is often assumed, in arguments against the punishment of the wicked, that it cannot consist with benevolence to approve of God's work of punishing the wicked—that the love required of us to our neighbour, would involve us in a quarrel with eternal justice, when we should see a neighbour falling under the inflictions of that justice. But the truth is, the Christian in his approval of the punishment of the wicked, does as he would be done by. One never really approves of the condemning voice of the law of God in relation to another, till he has first approved of it in relation to himself. No sinner ever passed the process of repentance and faith in Christ, without being slain by the law—without seeing and most deeply feeling, that he is justly condemned by the law of God—and that God would be just, and deserving of his love, if he should send him to hell. And every Christian having seen, confessed, and approved of the justice of eternal punishment in his own case, makes no departure from benevolence, when he approves of it in the case of others. His love of himself has not hindered him from taking the side of God against sin in himself, and his love to his neighbor—required to be as to himself—need not hinder him from approving of the justice of God in its relations to his neighbour. The truth is, every loyal subject of God's kingdom approves of God's law, both in its precepts and in its penalties.—*Puritan Recorder.*

The Progress of Christ's Kingdom.

The following is the closing paragraph of an article in the last Christian Review, entitled "The Last Fifty Years:"

Our thoughts run forward to greet the men who shall stand in our pulpits to preach the gospel of Christ on the first Sabbath of the next century. We welcome them ere yet they may be born to the unspeakable privilege of living in such an epoch of time. We who write and read, now in adult life, will take no part on earth in the worship of that day. Our children, now in the bud and promise of life, will be in our places with heads silvered with the honors of age. On the morning of that Sabbath, the familiar hymns which we now sing in our homes and sanctuaries, will be begun in the crowded cities of our sea-board, repeated by millions of a religious people in towns and cities through our extended interior, rolled onward with the progress of the hours farther to the West, till, with the setting of the sun, they die away amid the soft murmurs of the Pacific. The islands of the sea will catch the strain, and as morning breaks

again on the Orient, there will be multitudes in swarthy India to re-echo the praise, and roll it onward again around the world. The day of universal jubilee will surely come. Every year bears the world nearer to its promised Sabbath. Generations pass from the earth, but time does not stop. Man and the world he inhabits are subject to change, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. The rock may be worn away by the encroachments of the sea, the mountains levelled by the attrition of ages, the stars may lose their light and the sun his glory, but the promise of God standeth sure and changeless on its immovable foundations. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: in His days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth. His name shall endure forever; His name shall be continued so long as the sun, and all nations shall be blessed in Him. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things, and blessed be His glorious name forever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen."

The Beauty of the Sky.

It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky. It is the part of creation in which nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him and teaching him, than in any other of her works, and it is just the part in which we least attend to her. There are not many of her other works in which some more material or essential purpose than the mere pleasing of man is not answered by every part of their organization; but every essential purpose of the sky might, as far as we know, be answered, if once in three days, or thereabouts, a great black ugly rain cloud were broken up over the blue, and everything well watered, and so all left blue again until next time, with perhaps a film of morning and evening mist for dew. But instead of this, there is not a moment of any day of our lives, when nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure.—*Modern Painter.*

A Word Fittingly Spoken.

Job Throgmorton, a Puritan minister, who was described by his contemporaries "as being as holy and as choice a preacher as any in England," is said to have lived thirty-seven years without any comfortable assurance as to his spiritual condition. When dying, he addressed the venerable John Dod, "What will you say of him who is going out of the world, and can find no comfort?"

"What will you say of him," replied Mr. Dod, "who, when he was going out of the world, found no comfort, but cried 'My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?'"

This prompt reply administered consolation to the troubled spirit of his dying friend, who departed within an hour after, rejoicing in the Lord.

GOING TO CHRIST.—"God," says Cecil, "has called us to meet his best gift to man—his only-begotten Son—not in a splendid court, but in a manger—in the wilderness—in Gethsemane—before the high-priest, when they spat in his face, and buffeted him, and smote him—at the cross—and at the sepulchre. Thus it is that he corrects the pride and ambition of the human heart."

Scientific.

Saturn's Rings.

At a meeting of the American Association for the Promotion of Science, held at Cincinnati last week, Prof. Pierce, of Cambridge, advanced a new theory in regard to the rings of Saturn. These beautiful appendages of that planet have hitherto been supposed to be composed of solid matter; but the idea was advanced by Prof. Pierce, and supported by arguments and calculations of great strength and ability, that the rings are not solid but fluid, of a substance which is either water or something similar. He also showed that the stability and existence of the rings is in nowise dependent upon the planet itself, but that they are supported in their position, at the same time maintaining an almost incredible velocity, by the influence of the numerous satellites