

The Christian

“Hold fast the form of”

SAINT JOHN, N. B., THURSDAY

beautiful the Virginia spring was; how the wild, bright blossoms were opening soft eyes to a softer sky, and the birds were singing a song of peace—peace, when for man there was no peace.

While she was reading his letter other tidings came; a long dispatch from one who knew and loved her boy; the story of an action, such as in these days of great battles we scarcely think of, where only a few companies were engaged, but in which Charley had fallen, severely wounded—fallen, as she would be proud to hear, bravely cheering on his men. He was wounded in an arm and leg, but was safely in the hospital, and they hoped, would do well.

It is strange how much strength is in the weakest and most loving type of women, in the hours which try men's souls. I do not think good Dr. Holmes, used to the horrors of the dissecting room, made ready one whit more coolly to start on his "search for the Captain" than she on hers for Captain Charley. I think she forgot nothing which he could need, and I do not believe a tear fell till all her preparations were over, and she sat in the cars on her way to him. What if her tears did fall then, silent but bitter, behind her thick veil? There would be no stain of them when he saw the face which must be cheerful for his sake.

How the time went she never knew till she stood beside his bed—saw him white and weak, with the impress of terrible pain on his face—but saw him alive, in this world!

"How you must have hurried, mother, to get here so soon! I did not expect you yet, but I am glad you are here. They will cut my arm off to-morrow. They can't save it. Sometimes such an operation proves fatal. I don't think it will in my case. I keep up a good heart; but if I should die, I should like to touch your hand and see your face the last thing in this world. First and last there's nothing like mother."

All that night she sat by him. If she was tired with her journey she did not know it. She only knew that to-night he was with her—tomorrow might be flowing between them the waters of that river from whose farther shore comes back no echo.

As for him, secretly he expected to die; but a great content shone from his eyes. He rejoiced in her presence, like a child lonely and tired who finds rest in its mother's bosom. He did not fear what the morrow would bring—if death, there had never been a moment when he shrank from it, since he offered his life to the need of his country.

The morning came at length, and with it the hour which was to decide his fate. Firmly he insisted upon sending his mother away. The moment there was any fear of death he told her she should be called; in the meantime he was resolute to spare her the sight of his suffering. She resisted for a while, then yielded to the force of his will. She never could have known worse torture, however, than her waiting. Was it for hours or moments—she could never tell—that she sat there with shut eyes and clasped hands waiting for her summons.

At last the assistant surgeon touched her arm. "He has borne the operation, Madam, much better than we feared. We shall save his leg, though he may always be a little lame. His arm is off, and, according to present appearances, we think he will get well. His courage will go a great way—he never groaned through the whole of it."

She heard the words as one in a dream, clutching at one thought. Her boy was alive—likely to live. She tried to stand, and could not. She began to guess then what the extent of the fear had been, whose reaction was so powerful and exhausting. Soon she gathered again strength and composure with the thought that he was waiting for her, and then she went to him.

Then she knelt by his bedside and felt his left arm, all he had now, touch her neck. The utmost exertion of her self-control could not keep back sobs and tears. Maimed and halt, her brave boy, of whose symmetry and strength she had been so proud!

She little knew what bitter, despairing thoughts were struggling just then in his heart. When it was all over, he had just begun to realize how strong had been his unconscious hope to die. It would have been so much better, he thought, than to live this helpless, disfigured hulk, shut out by fate from manhood's work and woman's love. Her passion of tears did him good. Remembering how she loved him, he grew strong to live for her sake. Very gently he touched her hair as he said,

"Mother, you would rather have me as I am, than not to have me at all?"

How that question stilled her rejoicings! How many mothers had given to the good cause their all—how many were weeping at that hour mad, useless tears, which never thrilled the cold foreheads of dead sons! She had her boy with her still—she could touch his lips—look in his eyes—he could hear when she spoke. What had she to do with sorrow? What was it to give an arm, and the grace of movement she had loved to watch, when still she could keep her boy, her brave, true boy! Smiling again through her tears she whispered,

"Charley, God is good. I think how desolate I must have been without you, and even as it is I am content."

Never had Captain Charley been so true a hero as when he put aside his own sorrow, the downfall of his hopes, the wound to his pride, and contented to strive to live not only, but to be contented with life for her sake.

In the days that followed she nursed him back to health again. Never, after that first hour, did either of them breathe a single regret. They accepted life with thankfulness, no protests; and I think at last Captain Charley grew even to be glad that he had been allowed to make his sacrifice for his country so costly.

The last week of May she brought him home. The apple-trees were in flower, full of a pink whiteness of glorious bloom. The fields about their country-house were green; and again, as when he went away, roses and heliotrope nodded in the open windows, and the bird, thrilling to old memories of summer isles, thrilled over them a mellow jubilee of sweet sounds, which the wild robins and gay orioles outside strove longingly to emulate.

And so, amidst birds and flowers and sunshine, Captain Charley sat down again at home.

"My work is over now," he said, glancing patiently, not sadly, at the empty sleeve at his side. "Perhaps God thought you were the one, mother, after all, who needed me the most, and this was His way of sending me back."—*Harper's Magazine.*

From the American Messenger.

SEIZE THE ROPE.

Three years ago a party of five, two gentlemen and three ladies, crossed the Niagara river in a small boat, many miles above the falls. They were young and light-hearted. They had a merry passage, spent a happy hour on the Canada

side, and then embarked for their return. All went well until they neared the centre of the stream. Just then there came down upon them a fierce gale of wind, rushing down the mighty river. The boat shot forward. It was in the mad current. The men plied their oars. They were strong and stalwart; but a power stronger than theirs held them within that dark line of swiftly moving waters.

They left the landing they aimed for behind them. They looked with speechless lips into each other's white faces. They knew that they were going down with the current. The oarsmen strained every muscle. If they could only breast the current for a while relief might come. One of the fragile oars snapped. One more hold gone. Never a word was spoken. Death and eternity stared them in the face. Upon one solitary oar and one single oarsman hung five precious lives. Surely, very surely they were going down with the dark current.

Two of the five were Christians, and they give me the joyful assurance that when the first great terror was over, they fell back upon hope and faith, and that to them the near prospect of death was swallowed up in victory.

Suddenly, when the hands of the oarsmen were bleeding and torn, when the signal of distress had long fluttered in vain, and the agitation and alarm had sowed the seeds of death in one fragile frame, a little boat was seen coming cautiously towards them. It turned back. It durst not venture too near. Not a word from the five. They seemed very near God and eternity.

Another and stouter craft put off, rapidly at first, then very slowly. It must not come within the power of the infuriated current. One moment it paused. No nearer. A rope was uncoiled. "Seize the rope," shouted the boat's crew. An eager hand caught it. The stout craft shot rapidly off, and the rescued boat was drawn from the hurrying current.

Sinner, you too are drifting swiftly and surely down a subtle current. A noble craft comes to your rescue. A rope is flung out to you. It is Jesus the mighty Redeemer. Seize that rope, and escape the destruction which awaits you.

E. H. A.

A SHORT SERMON—THE GOOD FIGHT.

"I have fought a good fight."—2 Tim. iv. 7.

The Christian's fight is a good fight—

1. Because it is a good cause.

With the justice and reason of any war, our soldiers are supposed to have nothing to do these are to be discussed in parliament, but no in barrack-rooms. The theory of a standing army is such, that from the commander-in-chief down to the drummer-boy, the soldier is considered a mere machine as the musket in his hands. This presents to many, one of the most serious and difficult questions as to the lawfulness of their profession. While we may feel no such scruples it ought to make us, as far as possible, to live peaceably with all men, and never, but as a last resort, appeal to the arbitrament of arms. How often have good men been found fighting on the bad side? and how often has the trumpet sounded from their distant homes and peaceful occupations, those who had no quarrels to settle nor wrongs to complain of, to the bloody world of slaughter; to destroy each other's lives, and to mangle each other's bodies, till in that poor mutilated humanity, a mother would not know her own son! In war both sides cannot be right and the death of every man, therefore, who falls on the side that stands up for the right against the wrong is a murder, on which the Almighty Judge will hold severe and solemn inquest—laying the guilt at the right door. But, however soldiers may come to regard themselves, or be regarded by others, as machines who are to obey orders without inquiring into the merits of the war, still a man is a man—he has what his arms have not, reason and conscience: nor can he, though he would, suppress their voice within him. I can fancy cases where he has little heart to fight. He is not sure that it is a "good fight." Ordered to cut down one, who, though a naked savage, stands on the shore of his country to defend it from aggressors, or on the threshold of his door to protect his wife and daughters from the hands of a brutal soldiery, the sympathies of a generous man cannot be on the same side as his sword.

Now, if soldiers of the cross, you have formidable enemies to contend with, you have an immense advantage in this—that your cause is just, and noble, and holy, and good. It is a "good fight." Your enemies are not your kindred, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh; they are the enemies of God and Christ; of virtue and liberty; of light and peace; of your children and of your race; of your bodies and of your souls—tyrants that would bind you in chains worse than iron, and burn, not your house above your head, but yourself in hell forever. I am not saying that the sword has not often flashed on the side of right and been bathed in tyrants' blood; but men never drew sword in a cause like this; nor to any battle so much as that to which I summon you with the world, the devil, and the flesh, are the few pithy words of a brave old general so appropriate. His men were waiting to be addressed ere the fight began. Erect in his saddle, with his gray hairs streaming in the wind, he stretched out his arms, and pointing to the foe in front, said, ere he rang out the word: "Fire!" "There are the enemy, if you do not kill them they will kill you." So with us. We must destroy sin, or be destroyed by it. Be assured that unless your prayers stop your sins, your sins will stop your prayers; and that, by God's help, you must kill sin, or sin will kill you.

2. Because here the victory is unmingled joy.

It is not so in other fights. The laurels that are won where groans of suffering mingle with the shouts of battle, are steeped in tears; and when cannons roar and bells ring out a victory, and shouting crowds through the street, and illuminations turn night into day, dark is many a home, where fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, widows and orphans, weep for the brave who shall never return. It is said of God, that, in sweet flowers, and singing birds, and painted shells, and shining stars, in all the beautiful and happy works of His hands, he takes delight; but the best and bravest soldiers have sickened at the sight of the work of their hands in that field of carnage, where, locked like brothers, in each other's arms, friend and foe lie quietly together in one gory bed. There are thorns in victory's proudest crown. He whom men call the Iron Duke, is reported to have said that there was nothing so dreadful as a battle won, but a battle lost.

Thank God, our joy over sins slain, bad passions subdued, Satan defeated, has to suffer no such abatements. Heaven, that I can fancy hiding its eyes from other battles, watches the fortunes of this with keenest and kindest interest; angels rejoice in your success; nor are any tears shed here but such as are poured from the father's eye, when, kissing the returned prodigal and fold-

and night she was coming and going.

bees loved her, and sang with her, and went on in company as fast as grown. Sometimes she bathed in the dew of the glistening or the sweet jasmine; sometimes she swung on the rapturous blossom, sometimes mounted upon the linden, or the locust full of white flowers, an sometimes on the crest of a lofty tulip tree or rushed into the woods fragrant with the honey suckle. But every day she grew happier. Her songs were now cheerful and loud. She laughed at her former dread of work; and what was curious, just in proportion as she worked, she grew handsome! The hands that encircled her grey became wide and bright like polished gold, her wings shone like leaves of silver. Her eye grew bright, and lost its squint, if it really ever had any. Her feet, kept clear by the morning dew, were in beautiful proportion. In short, there was not a happier or more beautiful bee in the whole hive. Even the lazy drones bowed an unmingled admiration as she passed. At the end of her sentence she stood once more before the queen "Hebe, the beautiful!" as she was then called. "Ah," said the queen, "I see how it is. It is a law of God, that she who is willing to work, and do good to others, shall be happy and grow beautiful by the process. Beauty casts her mantle only on the industrious and the good."

FOREIGN MISSIONS AND TOBACCO.

There are in Christendom about 70 Protestant foreign mission societies in active operation, at the present time. These employ not far from 6000 missionaries and assistants, native helpers &c. The entire work is sustained at an annual expense of \$9,000,000, and the mission churches number 110,000 communicants. Twenty-five of these 70 societies are in Great Britain, and raise \$5,000,000 per annum; 24 are in Germany, Holland, Switzerland, France, Sweden, Norway, and British America, and these raise annually \$3,000,000; 16 are in the United States, and their annual receipts are \$1,000,000, sustaining 400 missionaries, and 1,500 native and other assistants with 70,000 communicants. The American societies seem to be managed more economically and to be more fruitful in immediate results, than the European.

Our own Baptist foreign society, the Missionary Union, during the 40 years of its history, has sent out 200 missionaries, at a total expense of \$3,000,000—an annual average of \$60,000. It present condition gives us 19 missions, with 1,400 stations and out-stations; 41 male and 48

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