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HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—Paul.

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INCOMPLETENESS.

Out of our lives we miss some note,

Something of melody fails us here;

Over the heartstrings floats a mist,

Out of the music falls a tear.

Something of sweetness out of the song

From the tremulous notes of the old refrain;

Something of weariness drifted in,

Something akin to secret pain.

Comes with the scent of the dewy cowslips,

Blows from the meadows all about;

Lives in the breath of the sweet red clover,

Drifted in silence through the gloom,

Over the music and buds and blossoms

A shadow falls that closely clings;

A something very akin to sorrow,

A discord that trembles amid the strings.

Emily S. Weed.

TEST OF CHARACTER.

The Y. M. C. A. Watchman, of Chicago, publishes some good articles.

The following from that paper is worthy of a careful and prayerful reading:

IS HE A CHRISTIAN?

Is he a Christian? He seems so stern, almost morose, in his habits and character.

His brow wears a perpetual frown. He manifests no sympathy with mankind.

He repels by his coldness kindly advances, and his very manner freezes every rivulet of affection that flows towards him.

"Be kindly affectionate one to another, with brotherly love." "Be kind, be courteous."

Is he a Christian? He seems to be proud. There is a forbidding haughtiness in his mien, as though he deemed himself of a superior race to those with whom he is associated.

He talks as though he were conferring an honor upon those with whom he condescends to mingle.

"God resisteth the proud." "The Lord hateth a proud look."

Is he a Christian? His conversation is all trifling. He labors to be witty. He aims to give a ludicrous direction to every topic of conversation.

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." "Foolish talking and jesting are not convenient."

Is he a Christian? He is perpetually finding fault. Nothing pleases him. Whenever you meet him you may be sure that the staple of his conversation will be the failings or faults of others.

"The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds." "Speak not evil one of another, brethren."

Is he a Christian? His whole soul seems to be absorbed in business. His time and thoughts are so engrossed by his secular affairs that he finds no leisure for interests benevolent or spiritual.

"Use this world as not abusing it." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Is he a Christian? He is noted in the community for his grasping and hoarding habits. He bends all his energies to money-getting, and he holds all he makes with an inflexible hand.

"Covetousness is idolatry." "Idolaters shall not inherit the kingdom of

God." "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Is he a Christian? He mingles in the gayest society, and seems to prefer it to association with those who are decidedly religious.

He has been known to be absent from the prayer-meeting, that he might spend the evening with a gay party.

He has been seen at the theatre, and takes excursions into the country on a Sabbath morning.

"I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation."

"Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand."

Is he a Christian? He manifests almost no interest in the welfare of the church, is untroubled by its adversity, and seems to care but little for its prosperity.

In regard to its progress, or efficiency, or purity he is chillingly indifferent.

"Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "If I forget the, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning."

HE IS A CHRISTIAN.

He is a Christian. Then he is a man of truth. Upon his word you may implicitly rely.

His promises are faithfully fulfilled. His representations he believes to be scrupulously exact.

He would not hazard his veracity upon a contingency.

"He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness." "He sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not."

He is a Christian. Then he is an honest man. He had rather wrong himself than wrong his neighbor.

In whatsoever business he may be engaged, you may be sure that his dealings will be honorable and upright.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "The way of the just is uprightness."

He is a Christian. Then he is a humble man. He thinks of his own infirmities, acknowledges his dependence upon God, and regards the wealthiest and the poorest of his brethren as men, objects of his Redeemer's interposing love, and worthy of his attention and interest.

"God giveth grace to the humble." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

He is a Christian. Then he is a kind man. He feels interested for his neighbors, and has ever a kind word for those he meets.

He strives to promote the welfare and happiness of those with whom he is associated. His generous heart delights in diffusing enjoyment.

"The law of kindness is in his tongue." "To godliness add brotherly kindness."

He is a Christian. Then he is charitable. He is prompt to attribute right motives rather than wrong to others, wherever it is possible.

Knowing his own liability to err, he will regard with a charitable heart the failures of others, and will be more ready to reclaim and restore than to censure them.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "Charity suffereth long and is kind."

He is a Christian. Then he is forgiving. Wrong does not rankle in his heart, craving for revenge. The forgiving word is ready upon his lip for his most implacable enemy.

"If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." "Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

He is a Christian. Then he is benevolent. He feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, ministers to the sick. Human distresses touch his heart and open his hand.

The spiritual maladies of mankind excite his commiseration, and to relieve and remove them his influence and property will be cheerfully contributed.

"Freely ye have received, freely give." "Whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

He is a Christian. Then he is a man of prayer. He lives in communion with God, for thus only can the life of Christianity be derived or preserved in the soul.

"In everything by prayer, let your requests be made known unto God." "When thou prayest enter thy closet."

He is a Christian. Then will he cherish and cultivate in his relations to God, and in his intercourse with men, "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, lovely, of good report."

All kinds of Sunday School Supplies can be supplied by the Visitor Book Room.

JEHOVAH HARDENING THE HEART.

BY REV. O. P. EACHES.

The contest between Jehovah and Pharaoh presents a moral difficulty.

It was a one-sided contest, for flesh and blood cannot equal the Almighty.

Pharaoh presents the picture of a strong-willed, stubborn man who does not know how to yield.

This makes the difficulty in any mind, for all can understand how a man, whose life is in his nostrils, may say to God, I will not.

But was there not under this seeming free agency of badness on Pharaoh's part a certain impulse from the Almighty? Was not his freedom only a tantalizing unreality? Did God work on his mind by some constraining power as men press the clay in brickyards?

In the book of Exodus by God's moral chemistry we have nineteen analyses of Pharaoh's conduct.

Seven times we have: "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart."

Two times we have: "Pharaoh hardened his heart."

Two times we have: "Pharaoh's heart was hardened."

If any one gets hold of the Bible idea of God as holy, just, good, neither tempting nor tempted, he may be ignorant of grammar and Hebrew idioms, but he will say at once, God cannot stir up, directly or indirectly, any man's heart to wrong doing. The instincts of the heart would be right. We must save God's honor whether we save the grammar or not.

Whatever of difficulty there may be in the expression, "The Lord hardened his heart," it meets us today as much as in the book of Exodus. Jehovah hardens men's hearts now is precisely the same way in which he hardened Pharaoh's heart.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart, to use the Scripture phrase, by putting upon him a just and righteous demand. The Hebrews were God's people. It was fitting and right that he should say, "Let my people go."

Pharaoh ought to have had a willing will; but in his state of heart the demand only irritated him. A kind reproof to a wandering brother may, if the heart be tender, win him back; but that same reproof if the heart be wrong, will only embitter and drive farther away. In Wayland's Intellectual Philosophy, we have these remarks on causation:

I present to a miser a case of distress, precisely calculated in its nature to awaken benevolence and emotions in the mind of an intellectual and moral being in a normal condition. But by a course of previous voluntary action, he has so changed his mind from its normal condition that the recital serves no other purpose than to harden his heart against suffering. In his present condition, the result as inevitably follows from my appeal as his death would from plunging a knife into his bosom. Granting the inevitableness in both these cases to be the same, is the connection between the two events of the same character. Suppose me to know the inevitableness to be the same, is the moral character of the two actions equal.

In these words is the secret of the process by which Pharaoh was made. Little Pharaohs are made now in the same way. God's holy and good commands meet a bad heart. They serve only to irritate, annoy, embitter. They awaken opposition by their very holiness and justice. John Calvin declared "when any one said 'You must,' he felt like saying 'I will not.'" That element exists in human nature.

In the same way, Jehovah's goodness acts as a hardening power. The goodness of God should lead to repentance, but oftentimes it leads to careless moral living. It even obscures God's moral nature, and leads men to say God is too good to punish sin. Thus men, to use Paul's words, despise God's goodness. The very riches and persistence of his goodness lead, not to a daily Jehovah Jireh, but to forgetfulness.

Jehovah's patience and mercy are perverted by bad hearts into hardening forces. Because punishment does not follow at once, the hearts of men are set in them to do mischief. The long suffering of God, which means salvation (2 Pet. iii. 15), becomes a good urging men to sin. When God lifted up his heavy hand from Pharaoh and gave him a respite, the meaning of this was perverted. (Ex. xi. 34.)

The hardening of men's hearts arising from the providential display of God's perfections, goes on still from day to day. Pharaohs are made through agencies that ought to make saints. Jehovah hardens men's hearts in this way only: by presenting agencies that ought to soften and subdue. Jehovah presents the occasion of hardening; man perverts the occasion and creates in himself the cause.

PUL'S CLOAK, BOOK, AND PARCHEMENTS.

"The Cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments."—2 Tim. iv. 13.

Some strange things have been said, and some exceedingly foolish remarks made upon this portion of Scripture. Ignorant people have called it "a little matter," and ridiculed the idea of its being mentioned in an inspired book. Others have suggested that the apostle needed the cloak for warmth, and his desire that this one might be brought, as a proof he was too poor to purchase another, also that the books were Latin and Greek works he desired to read during his confinement in prison, and the parchments, probably the originals of letters which he had written, or parchments of Holy Scripture. We humbly submit there is far more meaning in the passage than at first sight appears. This apostle was looking forward to his second trial. It was of the utmost importance for him to appear in his true character, and avail himself of the privileges of a Roman citizen. The cloak had superseded the "toga" formerly worn, and was the proper attire for one free of the city to appear in before the Emperor. The books, probably contained laws or precedents which might be advantageous to a prisoner upon his trial, and the parchments documentary evidence of his citizenship.

Now, Troas was a principal seaport town of Asia Minor. Very likely the apostle was seized at Troas. The soldier on such occasions usually appropriated to themselves as perquisites any extra garments and whatever might be in the possession of their prisoners. The apostle, forewarned of his seizure, had therefore prudently committed these things to the care of a certain honest man named Carpus; and now finding they would be of service to him, and being some six hundred miles from Troas, he directs Timothy, who is coming that way, to bring them with him.

The lesson we learn from this is, always to avail ourselves of all means at our command, and then confidently to leave results with God.

J. E. CRACKNELL.

York Town.

A PALACE OF SILENCE.

Away up on the hill that overlooks Naples stands the Carthusian monastery of San Martino. The men who once inhabited the glorious palace—for it is nothing less—were men of noble birth and vast fortune. The church is now one of the most magnificent in Italy. Agate, jasper, lapis-lazuli, amethyst, Egyptian granite and fossil-wood, together with marbles of every tint, are so blended in mosaics that line the whole edifice, and the carvings are so rich and graceful, that the interiors of some of the chapels seem like Eden bowers transfixed by a miracle, and frozen into stone. And in this spot lived a brotherhood who came from the first circles of society, and barred themselves in this gorgeous tomb, for it was little else. The monks took a vow of perpetual silence, lived apart, ate apart, and met only for the unsocial hours of prayer, when each was wrapped in his own meditation, and no one uttered a syllable. Each one of the little cells where they slept had a small window or closet communicating with one of the corridors, and in this closet was placed the frugal meal, which was then taken into the cell and eaten in solitude. Every quarter of an hour a bell struck to remind the listeners that they were so much nearer their death. In the gardens the railings are ornamented with marble skulls, and the only sounds which used to disturb this splendid solitude were the tread of sandaled feet, the rustle of long white robes, or the clang of the bell that told of their solemn lives, in brief moments, and yet might have seemed long to them. These monks, like most others in Italy, have been driven from their retreat, and all their treasures confiscated by Victor Emmanuel.

God make us brave to meet each loss Without a sigh;

To do our work and bear our cross, Nor question why.

He knows the secret of our way, And what is best;

The long, dark sorrows pulse with praise, And lead to rest.

AN INFIDEL BLACKSMITH.

In one of the States of America there was an infidel who was a great despiser of God, a hater of the Sabbath and all religious institutions.

What to do with him the ministers did not know. They met together and prayed for him. But among the rest one Elder B—resolved to spend a long time in prayer for the man; after this he got on horseback, and rode down to the man's forge, for he was a blacksmith. He left his horse outside, and said, "Neighbor, I am under great concern about your soul's salvation. I tell you I pray day and night for your soul's salvation."

He left him and rode home on his horse. The man went inside his house after a minute or two, and said to one of his faithful friends, "Here's a new argument: here's Elder B—been down here; he did not dispute, and never said a word to me except this, 'I say, I am under great concern about your soul; I can not bear you should be lost.' O! that fellow," he said, "I can not answer him;" and the tears began to roll down his cheeks. He went to his wife and said, "I can't make this out; I never cared about my soul; but here's an elder that has no connection with me, has come five miles this morning on horseback just to tell me he is under concern about my salvation."

After a little while he thought it was time he should be under concern about his salvation too. He went in, shut the door, began to pray, and the next day he was at the elder's house, telling him that he too was under concern about his salvation, and asking him to tell him what he must do to be saved.

A GOOD EXPERIENCE.

God knows me better than I know myself. He knows my gifts and powers, my failings and my weaknesses, what I can do and not do. So I desire to be led, to follow him, and I am quite sure that he has thus enabled me to do a great deal more in ways which seem to me almost a waste in life, in advancing his kingdom, than I could in any other way. I am sure of that. Intellectually, I am weak; in scholarship, nothing; in a thousand things a baby. He knows this, and so he has led me, and greatly blessed me, who am nobody, to be some use to my church and fellow-men. How kind, how good, how compassionate art thou, O God! O, my father keep me humble! Help me to have respect toward my fellow men, to recognize these several gifts as from thee. Deliver me from the diabolical sins of malice, envy, or jealousy, and give me a hearty joy in my brother's good work, in his gifts and talents, and may I be truly glad in his superiority to myself, if God be glorified. Root out all weak vanity, all devilish pride, all that is abhorrent to the mind of Christ. God hear my prayer. Grant me the wondrous joy of humility, which is seeing thee as all in all.—Dr. Norman McLeod's Diary.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR FRIENDS.

In the first place, don't be too exacting. If your friend don't come to see you as often as you wish, or if she is dilatory about answering your letters, don't make up your mind at once that she has grown cold or indifferent, and above all don't overwhelm her with reproaches. Rest assured that there is no more certain way of killing a friendship than in exactions and upbraidings. It is quite possible that your friend may have other duties and engagements whose performance employs the very time you would claim, and instead of being neglected, you are only waiting your turn. Perhaps she comes to you in her rare intervals of leisure to be rested and cheered, and helped by your affections and sympathy. But is she likely to find cheer and comfort in your society if you meet her with doubts, with coldness, or with a sense of injury, and insist on a full account of how she has spent her time, and whether she could not possibly come before. In nine cases out of ten she will go away feeling that she is injured by what you consider affections, and that your friendship is a trouble rather than a help.

"I think, when God makes his presence felt through us, we are like the burning bush: Moses never took any heed what sort of a bush it was—he only knew the brightness of the Lord."—George Eliot.

LIKE THE SWIFT SHIPS.—How

swiftly the mariner flies from a threatening storm, or seeks the port where he will find his home. You have sometimes seen the ship cut through the billows, leaving a white furrow behind her, and causing the sea to boil around her. So is life like the swift ships, when the sails are filled by the wind, and the vessel dashes on, dividing a passage through the crowded water. Swift are the ships, but swifter far is life. The wind of time bears me along. I cannot stop its motion. I may direct it with the rudder of God's Holy Spirit. Like a swift ship, my life speeds on its way till it reaches its haven. Where is the haven to be? Shall it be found in the haven of bitterness and dreariness, that region of the lost? Or shall it be the sweet haven of eternal peace, where not a troubling wave can ruffle the quiescent glory of my spirit?—Spurgeon.

Bishop Taylor beautifully remarks: "Prayer is the key to open the day, and the bolt to shut in the night. But as the clouds drop the early dew and the evening dew upon the grass, yet it would not spring and grow by that constant and double falling of the dew, unless some great shower at certain seasons did supply the rest—so the customary devotion of prayer twice a day is the falling of the early and later dew; but if you will increase and flourish in works of grace, empty the great clouds sometimes and let them fall in a full shower of prayer. Choose out seasons when prayer shall overflow, like Jordan, in time of harvest."

OUR NOBLEST SERVICE.—We must

not offer to God, except of our best. It must be the noblest, as for him who is beyond word or thought; and it must be the noblest, as ennobling us who serve him, and making us more like himself. It must be the happiest of services. For what is God but infinite beatitude and eternal joy? All that is right and happy comes from him. Our worship must be happy in itself, and must be such as while it gladdens the tenderness of God, shall also fill our souls with that abounding happiness in him which is our main strength in all doing and all holy suffering.—F. W. Faber.

We must never, never give up one inch of ground that has been gained. The young ensign at Alma, you remember, stood his ground when all the rest of the regiment went back. The captain called out to the ensign, "Bring the colors back!" but the ensign replied, "You bring the men up to the colors!" And so with us. Ye who bear the standard of the Lord never know how to retreat. The men must be brought up to the colors; never the colors taken back to the men.—The Christian.

Blot out Christianity, and the world will not only be lost in darkness and sin, but homes will be wrecked, humanity brought down to despair and ruin. Which system, therefore, has done, and is doing, for the world and humanity the greatest good? Which of these two systems is now breaking the fetters which bind mankind? Oh, is it not Christianity in all its power, freedom and beauty, that brings the world from darkness unto "the light and liberty of the blessed gospel of the Son of God?"

Believers are not dependent upon circumstances. Their joy comes not from what they have, and from what they are; not from what they enjoy, but from that which they have suffered for them by their Lord. It is a singular joy then, because it often buds, blooms and ripens in winter time, and when the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no herd in the stall, God's Habakkuk rejoice in the salvation.—Spurgeon.

"It's poor work allays sittin' the dead above the livin'. We shall all on us be dead some time, I reckon—it 'ud be better if felks 'ud make much on us before hand instid o' be ginnin' when we're gone. It's but little good you'll do awaterin' the last year's crops."—Mrs. Poyser in Adam Bede.

"I need not be missed, if another succeeds me to reap down those fields which in spring I have sown: He who ploughed and who sowed is not missed by the reaper. He is only remembered by what he has done."—Bonnar.