

Pastor and People.

OUR FOES.

A man's worst foes are those within his heart—
Which often seem to him his dearest friends,
Nor ever once suspects, until life ends,
That they have slain him as with deadly dart.

If by rare chance and grace of God's good part
We waken from the lethargy (which sends
A numbing influence over us and blind—
The ill and good) how bitter is the smart!

So let us probe far down the dismal wound
And drag forth every foe that lurks within
(Alas how many are there ever found!)
Until we know not of one soul's dear sin,
Then should we feel a happiness more blest
Than sleepless eyelids that at length find rest.

—Alexander Macaulay.

AN OLD MAN'S THOUGHTS OF HEAVEN.

If I am indeed what I have long professed to be, and hope that I am, I shall ere long be there. I some time since passed the bounds of three score and ten years, and in the natural course of things my life must soon be cut off, and I shall fly away. And, by the grace of God, I shall enter within the pearly gates and become an inhabitant of the celestial city.

There I shall see, and hear, and know,
All I desired or wished below

I shall see my blessed Saviour face to face. I shall behold Him arrayed in the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. I shall have near and uninterrupted communion with Him. Here it has often been hindered by sin and unbelief; but there nothing shall intervene, and the unclouded sunshine of His face shall ever cheer my soul.

There I shall be forever done with sin. This has long been my greatest evil. Long have I waged warfare with it, and in vain sought to overcome. Many a time have I cried out almost in despair: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But I shall be presented faultless before the presence of the Divine glory with exceeding joy. I shall have wrought in me that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. I shall shine in blest resemblance to Him. I shall awake in His likeness and be satisfied.

And glorious will be the company with which I shall be associated. Here, an imperfect creature myself, I have dwelt amongst imperfect creatures. Thus has my soul often been vexed. But there I myself, and all with whom I shall be associated, shall be holy as God is holy. We shall all bear the spotless image of the Saviour. The angels will be holy angels. The saints will be the spirits of just men made perfect. All shall be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is their righteousness. There I shall have fellowship with Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Daniel, and all the worthies of the old dispensation, who walked with God; and with John, and Peter, and Paul, and with all the holy and the good of every age.

And most delightful will be my employments. I shall contemplate with supreme satisfaction the perfections, and works, and ways of God. I shall be forever increasing in the knowledge of Him. I shall know more and more of the wonders of that redemption into which the angels desire to look; and I shall bear some humble part in that immortal song of which it is the exalted theme. I shall be forever unspeakably blessed. I shall drink of the river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and I shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God. I can now but faintly conceive of the glorious things that God has there prepared for them that love Him. Nor can I but faintly realize that I shall so soon wake and find me there.

O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God,
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of my soul

—Senex, in *Herald and Presbyterian*.

FAMILY PRAYERS.

From one cause or another the custom of assembling the family for prayers every day, either in the morning or the evening, seems, unfortunately, to be on the wane. Very much in our restless, eager life, so full of competitions and of conflicts, militates against this excellent family habit. If the home is in the suburbs, some miles from the office or the shop, and the business man must rush from the breakfast table to catch a train, he often feels too hurried to be in the proper devotional frame; he has an instinctive perception that in his prayers and Bible reading he is running a race with the locomotive, and this does not commend itself to his mind as an appropriate or decent thing to do.

Children, obliged to be in school at a stated hour, often ask to be excused from morning prayers. They have a lesson to review, or an exercise to write, or some last toilet duty, as buttoning shoes, or mending gloves, to perform, and if their presence insisted upon they fume and fret over the delay thus involved. A strong pressure is thus brought to bear from the earth-side against this heaven seeking at home in the morning.

At even-tide it is no better. Various meetings, some of them religious, some merely social, summon people as they rise from the supper, or late dinner, which is becoming the general fashion for families to take. Callers come in. The young people have numerous engagements. Before the family are aware of what has happened, the family prayers in the evening have been so often omitted that the blessed habit finally is lost by default.

Yet, what a pity to part lightly with so great an advantage, so precious a comfort!

At the family altar the family bond is strengthened as nowhere else. Hearts draw closely together there. The absent child is remembered. Perhaps that child, grown to manhood, is surrounded by temptations. Is there not for him a safeguard in the blessings sent to him daily, by way of the Throne? Can he forget the little circle in the sitting room, the heads bent low, the father's tender voice! Shall not that memory be an amulet in many a day of trouble?

"Thy God, and thy father's God!" Happy are the homes which have so anchored here that the hopes allied to the promises never break faith's cable.

Self-consciousness, partly, and partly the lack of knowing how to conduct family worship simply, and, also, when necessary, briefly, keeps some from establishing the little service in the daily life. Let me tell you how easily it may be done.

In a household where I was the guest the other day a daughter goes to the piano and plays the air of a familiar hymn. Everyone sings. I shall not soon forget the sweet pleading voices in "Let the Saviour in," nor the solemnity and beauty of "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide," as I heard them sung in that home. After the hymn every child from the youngest upward, recites a verse of Scripture in turn, and the father then reads a short passage in a Psalm, and leads in prayer.

In another household the custom is simpler still. The father or mother reads the text and stanza for the day from an everyday text-book, and then the simple and brief petitions follow; commending the household to God's care, and acknowledging His constant blessings.

The reading of a Psalm and the repetition, in concert, of the Lord's prayer by the whole family, would constitute family worship.

As a breakwater against the incursions of worldliness, as a protection to the family against unbelief, as the tribute justly due to our fathers' God, let us hold fast to family prayer.—*Mrs. M. E. Sangster.*

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM.

I am asked: "Was this prayer of Christ on the cross answered?" I reply, yes; but we must understand what is the Bible idea of forgiveness. To this end let us turn to Acts ii. 36-38. Peter was preaching to a portion of the crowd that had cried: "Crucify Him," and had mocked Jesus while He was hanging on the cross. It was for these men that our Saviour prayed. But fifty days had passed and they were not forgiven. Peter publicly charged them with the awful crime. And when they were told that He whom they had crucified was "both Lord and Christ," they were pricked in their hearts, and cried: "What shall we do?" Peter did not reply, You are forgiven since Christ prayed for you, and the Father heareth him always. No; he said: "Repent and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins." Christ's prayer was not for the pardon of those who persisted in sin; for such a pardon would sap the very foundations of truth and right, and would not benefit the sinner after all. No power can save a man who continues to drink poison and to refuse the antidote. The spirit of prayer was that they might not be destroyed at once and forever, as their sins deserved, but that they might be spared so as to have time and space for repentance; that they might be warned and entreated, as they were on the Day of Pentecost; that they might have the Holy Spirit to persuade and enable them to repent, and that when they did repent they might be forgiven.

The prayer of Christ for His murderers in His prayer for all who are in their sins. Persistent impenitency repeats the crime of Calvary. It is crucifying the son of God afresh. Modern sinners, like those who stood around the cross, do not fully realize what they are doing. And hence the loving Saviour prays for them, that if they repent they may be forgiven. Encouraged by this prayer we go into all the world preaching repentance for the remission of sins.—*Herald and Presbyterian.*

KEEP YOUR WORD WITH THE CHILDREN.

We cannot estimate too highly the importance of keeping faith with the children. When once that is destroyed the corner-stone of our influence is taken away. It will not be strange if the whole structure will crumble around us, overwhelming us with trouble and unavailing sorrow.

It is related that the Earl of Chatham had promised that his son should be present at the demolition of a wall about the estate, but through accident it was pulled down in his absence. His lordship felt the importance of his word being kept sacred, so he ordered the wall to be rebuilt that his son might be present when it was again demolished, as he had promised. It was not that a child's whim might be humoured, but that his faith in his father's word might be unshaken.

Those little open eyes take sharp note of our actions from a very early age. You may sometimes get on the blind side

of older people, but rarely of a little child. They go right through the flimsy disguises of sophistry and worldly politeness, and come down to bare plain facts.

A little child had been promised the next time grandpa came he should go home with him. The next time came, but the promise was not fulfilled, so the child reminded him of it.

"You don't think grandpa would tell a lie?" asked the old gentleman, sadly concerned.

"I don't know," answered the child; "what does grandpa call it?"

A mother had promised a cake to her little boy when she returned home one day, but being absent for several hours she forgot it. The little boy had been watching long at the window for her, and his disappointment was great, but not so great as his amazement at his mother for breaking her word. "Forgot" was a word whose meaning he did not know. Mother went quickly out and bought the cake; but still the trouble lingered in his mind, and he was heard saying softly to himself, by way of comfort: "Mother only forgot." He could not bear to think she had told a lie. Have your children equal sensitiveness with regard to your truthfulness?

One almost trembles to hear the scores of promises which thoughtless mothers make, with no thought of ever fulfilling them. But children very soon learn to value them at what they are worth; and who can estimate the consequences to their immortal souls of this early lesson in falsehood?—*Sunday School Times.*

HOW TO MAKE LIFE HAPPY.

Take time; it is no use to foam or fret, or do as the angry housekeeper who has got hold of the wrong key, and pushes shakes and rattles it about the lock until both are broken and the door is still unopened.

The chief secret of comfort lies in not suffering troubles to vex us and in cultivating our undergrowth of small pleasures.

Try to regard present vexations as you will regard them a month hence.

Since we cannot get what we like, let us like what we can get.

It is not riches, it is not poverty, it is human nature that is the trouble.

The world is like a looking-glass. Laugh at it and it laughs back; frown and it frowns back.

Angry thoughts canker the mind and dispose it to the worst temper in the world—that of fixed malice and revenge. It is while in this temper that most men become criminals.

THE RANGE OF THE BIBLE.

Let us look at the vast range of the Bible; let us retrace in the sacred history of the discipline of the world the largeness of the mode of God's action; let us ponder the manifestations of His love, of His patience, of His long suffering, sometimes even startling to our eyes; let us trace, with aching sight, how He makes man minister to man, and race to race, and generation to generation; let us notice how He accepts in compassion varieties of service according to the state and means of those who render it, how He turns to a source of blessing what appears to our eyes simple misery and ruin; and hope will rise upon us which we often sorely want; a hope which will not cover with a dull, colourless cloud of indifference the religious positions of men, but on the contrary make us feel, since we have received a priceless heritage, what is perilled in our energy, what we owe and what we render to others who are heirs with us of a common salvation.—*Canon Westcott.*

TRUST HIM THROUGH.

Sometimes we have an experience in life that seems like walking through a long, dark tunnel. The chilling air and the thick darkness make it hard walking, and the constant wonder is why we are compelled to tread so gloomy a path while others are in the open day of health and happiness. We can only fix our eyes on the bright light at the end of the tunnel, and we comfort ourselves with the thought that every step we take brings us nearer to the joy and the rest that lie at the end of the way. Extinguish the light of heaven that gleams in the distance, and this tunnel of trial would become a horrible tomb. Every week a pastor has to confront these mysteries in the dealings of a God of love. To the torturing question, "Why does God lead me into this valley of the shadow of darkness?" We can only reply: "Even so Father, for so it seems good in Thy sight." We are brought into the tunnel, however we may shrink back. There is no retreat; we have nothing left to us but to grasp the very hand that brought us there and push forward.

When we reach heaven, we may discover that the richest and deepest and most profitable experience we had in this life were those which were gained in the very roads from which we shrank back with dread. The real victory of faith is to trust God in the dark and through the dark. Let us be assured of this, that as the lesson and rod are of His appointing, and that as His all-wise love has engineered the deep tunnels of trial on the heavenward road, He will never desert us during the discipline. The vital thing for us is not to deny and desert Him.—*Dr. T. L. Cuyler.*