

THE SECRET HINDRANCES.

When you summon your physician to your bedside, the first thing you expect from him is to discover what is the matter with you. He explores your wrist for the pulse, inquires the symptoms, and when he ascertains the nature of your disease he is able to prescribe for you intelligently. Standing outside of your body, he must deal with a malady working within.

Many of my own congregation and many of the readers of this journal are suffering from the spiritual disease of sin, and are yet unconverted to Christ. The Psalmist prayed that he might know "what evil way was in him," and might be led into the way everlasting. Now there must be some evil way in every unconverted heart, which requires to be discovered and to be abandoned. Nine-tenths of all impenitent persons are kept from Christ by some secret hindrance. It is very important to ascertain what that hindrance is. If a man is not a Christian, there is usually a reason for his rejecting the most precious of all gifts—the "gift of eternal life."

1. Some are hindered from accepting Christ by an evil way of thinking. In their hearts there is a secret scepticism. Whatever dispute there may be about the responsibility of a man for his own belief, it is undeniably true that he is responsible for the consequences of his belief. If I form an opinion and act upon it, I must take the consequences. If a young man forms so high an opinion of a young woman that he marries her, and she proves to be a vixen, he cannot escape the misery he has brought upon himself by his own voluntary choice. Kind reader, you may have adopted an opinion adverse to the distinct declarations of God's Word, and adverse to the claims of the Divine Saviour. When you meet that Saviour as your Judge, you alone will be responsible for the consequences of having rejected His offered salvation. It is perfectly safe to obey God's Word. You will be an immense gainer by keeping Christ's commandments. But you run a tremendous risk of eternal ruin if you make up your mind against both the Gospel and its offers of eternal life. I have officiated at many funerals; but never at one in which the surviving friends wished it to be stated that the deceased person had lived and died a rejecter of Jesus Christ. I have never heard of a dying man as desiring that this should be said of him. Yet this will be the exact truth in regard to you if you cling to your sceptical opinion to your last breath. God is always right. See to it that you are not wrong. Your error may cost you your soul!

2. Others are hindered from following Christ by an evil way of looking at the faults of professed Christians and of shutting their eyes to their own sins. I do not wonder that the discovered iniquities of some church members has awakened your just indignation. If I did not know that the Christianity of the Bible is vastly better than the lives of even the best of its professed followers, I should be sometimes disturbed in my own mind by the detected vices of certain professors of religion. But I have also learned never to reject a good "greenback" because there are some counterfeiters afloat. You will certainly admit that the person who lives up most closely to the pure and benevolent and holy teachings of Jesus Christ is decidedly the better for so doing. Upon the tree of his daily life there may be a few gnarled or wormy apples among the bushels of good fruit. Now, is it not rather contemptible for you to spy out those scrubby and worm-eaten outgrowths, and claim that they are fair specimens of the fruit which his piety produces? No sensible Christian professes to be perfect. The best things in every Christian are the legitimate fruits of his religion. The weak or wicked things are born of his own yet imperfectly renewed heart. You fasten on his faults, and refuse to acknowledge the immense benefits he has gained by his even imperfect imitations of his Divine Master. You see his few sins. You do not see his repentances.

It was said in olden times of certain persons like you: "They eat up the sins of my people; they have left off to take heed to the Lord." Precisely thus are you eating up the poor, gnarled fruit that you cull off from the branches of a Christian neighbour's life.

The good fruit you reject, and persist in setting your teeth on edge and in souring your system by devouring the little that is worthless. This wretched diet may fatten your prejudices; but it is starving your soul. Nay, worse. It is setting you against the very bread of Heaven and leading you on to the guilt and peril of throwing away your own salvation. I beg you not to cling an hour longer to this evil way. It will never lead you to a better life or to Heaven.

3. A more common hindrance than either scepticism or censoriousness is the dominion of some secret sin. In digging up a tree, especially if it is an elm, the workman is surprised to see how long the tree will stand after the earth has been removed and the lateral roots have been cut off. What holds the tree is the "taproot." Until that is sundered the stubborn trunk will not yield. So in the impenitent heart there is often a favourite sin which the heart is unwilling to sacrifice. A covetous man clings to his money, and refuses to give up Mammon for Christ. The sensualist will not deny his lusts, if that be the prerequisite to receiving Christ. Sometimes a stubborn sin fairly blocks the road; and the man must decide whether he will give up his besetting sin or give up the salvation of his soul. That was the battle with the young ruler. He would not put the knife to his selfishness. So the sin remained, and Christ was kept out of his heart. I laboured long—as did many others—with a friend whose secret sin was licentiousness. He listened attentively to our appeals and seemed grateful for our interest in his welfare. But he died unconverted. The evil way kept him out of the "way everlasting." No man can ever exercise saving faith until he has repented of sin and cast it from him.

4. The last hindrance that is quite as effectual in cheating the soul out of Christ as any other is that treacherous tempter *To-morrow*. Millions of impenitent people will tell you: "I expect, I intend to become a Christian before I die." But when? Has God ever hung a promise on to-morrow? Does he not tie down the offer of salvation to the word "now?" Ah! my friend, if a purse of gold was awaiting you before you go to bed to-night, you would not whisper the word "to-morrow." You ought to curse that lying word. It has sent millions to perdition. Before this year closes you may be in eternity. Living without Christ is Hell begun. Dying without Christ is Hell perpetuated. Living for Christ is the first instalment of Heaven. Give Him thy heart, and He will "lead thee in the way everlasting."—*Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.*

THE MINISTER'S WIFE—A TRUE STORY.

We were about getting a new minister, a difficult matter, as all can testify who have tried it. He had preached for us a Sabbath or two. He was earnest; that was unquestioned; had a consistent life for his record, and that was a great point; was a good thinker, and a fearless advocate of what he believed, but his voice was poor, he was not quite so famous as some wished, and his bearing was not sufficiently marked and dignified, some of the people said.

Yet as often as anything disparaging was remarked, somebody immediately added, "But his wife is lovely!" We heard this reiterated so often that some of us finally said, "What difference does it make? We thought it was not the wife we were to settle over us, but the man himself." Every possible objection was overruled however, because the wife was so beyond compare.

He came, and brought with him one whom we were all eager to see and know; one of the sunniest, gentlest, yet strongest, most unselfish women it has ever been my blessing to know and love. She was not beautiful, but her face had such a kindling of interest for one and all, that you could never forget its expression.

She entered heartily into his work; they were all her people, her friends. She showed no partiality. No one of us ever felt that she liked one above another. She kept our secrets locked in her own heart, and never betrayed a trust.

No one ever heard her speak ill of another. She was approachable to everybody, yet we paid her defer-

ence, both from her position and because we loved her. Men and women received alike equal favour and honour at her hands. We looked to her as a leader, while she was in reality a companion. We expected her home and husband would be first in her care and her affections, and so they were.

She was interested in everything, cultured enough to talk with the learned, and not above the poorest and most ignorant of her flock. She never showed irritability. If she had temper, she conquered herself by prayer. She was her husband's best adviser.

Not everything went right with the minister. He was able, but not always wise; sometimes hasty, sometimes domineering, it seemed; sometimes saying things better left unsaid, occasionally too frivolous, and now and then too austere. Some said he liked the rich better than the poor; the cultured better than the unlettered. Some said he was over-ambitious; that he was not always unconscious of himself; others that he lacked magnanimity in pecuniary matters and in the little things of every-day life; but they liked his preaching, and always added: "He has such a lovely wife!"

She healed all differences, and really kept the church a unit by her kindness and Christian tact. A wife less sympathetic, or less wise and capable, would have completely changed the aspect of affairs.

A little child came into the minister's home, and the young wife went out of it. I never saw a church so crushed. For weeks and months every face wore a wistful look, as though they hoped in some unexplained way to meet her, perchance, and feel again her cordial welcome. The pastor too began to realize as never before how she had brightened and sustained him. The people cared for the motherless child, because it was *her* baby. A blessed revival followed, and her death was the spiritual life of a great number. The little failings of the minister were forgotten in the noble work he did to win souls, and yet they were not fully satisfied, and the pastorate was changed.

Our pulpit has since then been filled by able and eloquent men, who have had pleasant wives, and our church has prospered, but our hearts have hungered again and again for the lovely woman who came to be such a power in our midst. We have said to each other often in all these years, "Doesn't it, indeed, make a difference what kind of a wife the minister has?" Ah, vastly more than he thinks, when he chooses her as his companion, and vastly more than the people imagine when he comes among them to be their leader and guide!—*Congregationalist.*

ORIGIN OF THE INQUISITION.

We must dwell a little on the events of 1229. This year a Council was held at Toulouse, under the Papal Legate, the Cardinal of St. Angela. The foundation of the Inquisition had already been laid. Innocent III. and St. Dominic share between them the merit of this good work. In the year of the fourth Lateran, 1215, St. Dominic received the Pontiff's commission to judge and deliver to punishment apostate and relapsed and obstinate heretics. This was the Inquisition, though lacking as yet its full organization and equipment. That St. Dominic died before it was completed alters not the question touching his connection with its authorship, though of late a vindication of him has been attempted on this ground, only by shifting the guilt to his Church. The fact remains that St. Dominic accompanied the armies of Simon de Montfort, that he delivered the Albigenses to the secular judge to be put to death—in short, worked the Inquisition so far as it had received shape and form in his day. But the Council of Toulouse still further perfected the organization and developed the working of this terrible tribunal. It erected in every city a Council of Inquisitors consisting of one priest and three laymen, whose business it was to search for heretics, in towns, houses, cellars, and other lurking places, as also in caves, woods, and fields, and to denounce them to the bishops, lords, or their bailiffs. Once discovered, a summary but dreadful ordeal conducted them to the stake. The houses of heretics were to be razed to their foundations, and the ground on which they stood condemned and confiscated—for