

The Assurance of Hope.

The man whose hope is in God may be kept waiting, but he will not be disappointed. He may have seasons when the heavens will seem to have turned to brass, and his prayers fall back upon him like so many dead words, but because his hope is in God his faith will exclaim, "Thou wilt hear me, O Lord my God!" and instead of giving up in despair, he will keep on calling and hoping until relief comes. If our hope is in riches, they take to themselves wings and leave us in poverty. If it is fixed in the favour of the world, the time may come when it will turn and frown upon us. If it is placed upon our loved ones, there is no certainty that they will be spared to us. If our hope is in a friend, sooner or later he may betray us and desert us, but to hope in God is to build our house upon a rock, where no storm can shake it. To know that we really do hope in God is to have peace when the tempest rages. To have quiet in our souls when the storm is roaring all around us, and to feel assured that no matter how threatening and forbidding things may look, He who notes the sparrow's fall is still caring for us. To have our hope centred in God is to know that He will hear us, and come to our help, and that, too, right early.

Success and Failure.

Success and failure are two very important words in everybody's life, and are two of the most important elements in the world's history. Paradoxical though the saying may be, "Success may be failure, failure may be success!" it nevertheless expresses a striking and world wide truth. Failures in innumerable instances have been the means of success, while on the other hand success has often and often been followed by complete failure.

Many instances of apparent failure proving to be success find their counterpart in the story of the young men digging over their inheritance to find their treasure, thinking it was in the form of buried gold, whereas the treasure lay in the fertility of the land resulting from their search. They seemed at first to fail because the treasure was not in the form they expected it to be. The pathetic story of Telemachus comes under the heading of apparent failures. Throwing himself into the arena, to stop the gladiators' fight, he was stabbed to death by command of the enraged onlookers; but his was the last human blood which ever stained the white floor of the Colosseum.

Failure is one of those objectionable practical lessons which has to be faced boldly in the battle of life, although it is hard to do so. The courage of some people is roused by failure, and they are stimulated to renewed efforts. Lacordaire, one of the most eminent preachers of modern times, only acquired celebrity after repeated failures.

Such precedents teach us not to fear apparent failure, for it may be on that dark foundation alone that the golden palace of our dreams may be reared, or that while we are vainly looking for success in her wonted garb she is already close to us wearing another form and different garments. Absolute failure, of course, cannot be success, but apparent failure may be, and often is. Appearances are often fallacious, and it may be that what is a necessary part of the workings of the laws of success may look like failure, as when the seed falls into the ground and dies, and lo, its death is the birth of a higher life. Again, there are instances of failure proving to be the greatest of blessings, simply because success would have proved a curse.

Afflictions, like failures, often prove blessings in disguise. Much of the best and most useful work has been done by men and women in the midst of affliction. Milton used to say that, "Who best can suffer best can do." Beethoven produced his greatest works amidst gloomy sorrow, when oppressed by almost total deafness. It was to a domestic affliction that we owe the beautiful writings of Mrs. Gaskell.

Pain and sorrow in many cases appear to be indispensable conditions to the success of some people, just as cheerfulness and courage are to others. Success in life is not looked upon by the wise man as an end, but as a means of happiness.

The greatest and most continued favors of fortune cannot in themselves make us happy; nor can the deprivation of them render altogether miserable the possessor of a clear conscience and a well constituted mind. The great Goethe put the question: "What is it that keeps men in continual discontent and agitation?" and he answered it thus truly: "It is that they cannot make realities correspond with their conceptions that enjoyment steals away from their hands, that the wished for comes too late, and nothing reached or acquired produces on the heart the effect which their longing for it at a distance led them to anticipate."

If success crowned our efforts straight off, where would be the great success of the hereafter? It is the brave resolution to be better next time that lays the substratum of all real greatness, and paves the way to real success.

Christian Controversies.

It may, indeed, be impossible to agree altogether as to questions of Church order or questions of duty—now and here—during our brief day of life, without some sacrifice of that perfect sincerity which is one of the soul's most precious jewels. Our controversies belong to an imperfect vision of truth; but they are likely to be tempered in such proportion as loyalty to our Sinless and Divine Lord, and not any one of the subtle forms of self-assertion which are so apt to beset us, is our real governing motive when we take part in them. In looking to Him, all Christians who merit the name meet and are one, just as men who are separated by seas and continents gaze on the same sun in the material heavens, and bask in his warmth and light. Whatever criticisms we may level at each other, or may deserve at each other's hands, and none of us can suppose that we are not open to some, nay, rather to much, just criticism—we turn our eyes upwards towards the heavens, and fix them on Him who none has yet conceived of sin, even of the slightest—in Whose life on earth there was seen, eighteen centuries ago, as now on His throne in heaven, a perfect harmony between a human will and the moral law of the universe. In His Light we shall see Light. The heaviness of our misunderstandings and our controversies may endure for a night; the joy of union will come with the eternal morning,—Canon Liddon.

Fasten Them.

If all the loose ends could be fastened, what a saving of time, temper and material there would be! Think of the frayed edges and raveling stitches that might be prevented by timely fastening! It is so with thoughts, feelings, resolutions and conduct. How many good things drop like stitches, or run away like frisky animals, for want of proper finishing or for lack of careful tying!

Now and then one has a particularly good and edifying thought that might be used in a letter, a composition, a little meeting, or upon some occasion when a thought is an actual necessity, and yet, when the emergency comes, behold! the thought has slipped away and is gone. It was not fastened. It is almost a hopeless quest to go in search of such things. Perhaps they hide in the convolutions of the brain, as it is said that nothing is destroyed; but if they cannot be found and brought into service, of what use are they? Plenty of material may exist in the next town, but that is small comfort to the girl who has not enough to finish the gown that is wanted for the evening fast coming on. One wants something at hand, to meet the demand.

Fasten the thoughts then as they come, if it is a possible thing. A pencil-mark or two may suffice. Jot them down and save them. Fasten plans and resolves that are worthy, by following them. Who will know that they exist, or will have the benefit of them, if they slip away into the region of "once upon a time" with nothing to show in the present? Fasten kind thoughts with kind words; that gives them a standing-place. Fasten the words to deeds, and that will send them on a mission instead of allowing them to slip away.

Be quick about this matter! Such agile things

as thoughts, resolves, plans and purposes, are not to be left unwatched, or allowed time to flee. It will take time, to be sure, and one will need to be on the alert, but what of it? Is any one put here simply to get on in the easiest, laziest way? A thousand times, no. Let nothing slip for want of fastening, no matter at what cost.

Divine Humanity.

It is only man daring to think of himself nobly, divinely—aye, as the Son of God—that there comes the possibility of putting his human powers to their perfect use. Character and service both fling their doors wide open to him who knows himself the son of God. Think how they stood wide open all the time to Jesus. Think how He always lived within their ample gates. The Divine soul within Him, and the great work before Him, to be Himself and to save the world, these made His life. Therefore, let the foxes have their holes, and the birds of the air their nests, let Pilate sit upon his throne, and the Pharisees weigh their mint, anise and cummin. He took these splendid human capacities of ours, and carried them beyond the stars into the heavenly worlds of character and service, and when men listened—as they had to listen—hark, in these visionary worlds, the same old human faculties had put out a new strength and worked with a pulse of power, and a throb of music which made heaven and earth stand still to listen. Yet it was our human patience with which he was patient, and our human bravery with which He was brave, and our human intelligence with which He knew, and our human purity with which He was pure, only they proved themselves divine when they attained their full humanity.—Phillips Brooks.

"Let Me Wear Two."

"Love is of God."

The following incident, recorded in the life of Sir David Baird, supplies a touching illustration of self-denying love.

Baird, then a young officer, and several other gentlemen of the British army, had fallen into the hands of their enemy, Tippoo Sahib, and were thrown into a dungeon, where they endured great miseries, heightened by the fact that some of the party (Baird included) were suffering from wounds. One day they were alarmed by the sound of a great clinking of iron outside their prison, and their fears were not lightened when the massive door unclosed and a party of natives, bearing heavy sets of fetters, entered, and flung down the irons on the floor of the dungeon. They were followed by a swarthy official of the tyrant, who gave command that a pair of fetters should be fastened on the limbs of each of the captives.

Then a grey-haired officer amongst the English came forward. He was himself scarred with many a wound; but thoughtless of self, he pointed to young Baird, and besought mercy for him. "That officer," he said, "has been wounded on the leg; the wound is yet green; to put a fetter on it would cause his certain death."

What cared the barbarous Asiatic whether the captive lived or died? His orders were simple, and could not be changed. He gave reply that there were just as many pairs of fetters as there were prisoners, and that, come what might, all must be worn!

"Then let me wear two," said the grey-headed hero.

I know not whether the generous request was granted; it seems probable that it was so, as Baird lived to quit his dungeon, and to enter as a triumphant victor the city which had been the scene of his sufferings; while the man who had offered to wear his fetters died in the prison of Tippoo!

Princess Beatrice Mary Victoria Feodora, widow of the late Prince Henry of Battenberg, is the greatest photograph collector in England. She has over 800 photographs placed about her various rooms, while she has thousands safely stored away. She has been an assiduous collector of photographs ever since she was a tiny child.