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WHOLE No. 90

We would be very much obliged if those to whom we addressed postal cards would respond soon. Of the thirty to whom we sent them only one as yet has sent in a remittance! Friends we are in need of funds to carry on the paper.

Culture and Character.

It is the thought of some that character can be transformed by culture. Educate men, we are sometimes told, and you will regenerate them. Give them culture and you will lift them out of the slough into which they have fallen. Transform their environment and you shall transfigure them. It all sounds well, but after all there is a fallacy in it.

Of course no one would deny that education and its consequent culture have an influence on the external lives of men. Neither will any one deny that if you can better one's external condition you stand a chance of improving his character. But the influence that is exerted in each case is too largely an external influence to very greatly transform the inward character. Something of inward impulse of course is imparted by education and its resultant culture. But it is not enough to reach the centre of man's being. It is not enough to capture the citadel of his soul. Some one has said "the profoundest education cannot change a man's nature." There is no question but that this declaration is true. There is something in the human heart, something in human nature that defies the touch of education, of culture. There is, if you will, an innate tendency to evil which will break away from the bonds of each and reveal the man in his true condition.

Now then, it is this phase of the problem of human transformation that Christianity meets. This regenerating power from the Spirit of God comes to and touches the man's inner life. He is born from above. He leaves something of the old life and takes on the new life which Jesus Christ imparts. Under this spiritual change old things pass away and all things become new. What education cannot do; what culture cannot do; what change in external environment cannot do that the new birth in Jesus Christ can do. It changes the man's nature; it makes him over. Moreover this is not theory alone, but fact. Practical illustrations of this can be found on every hand. This is the testimony that Christianity is bearing to itself all the time. It is transforming the nature of men so that the selfish, the base, the sensual, the covetous, the evil inclined, are turned face about and made to emulate in some measure the example Jesus Christ has set. It is this work of Christianity that in these days demands special emphasis. It is a fact that men recognize and are ever ready to acknowledge. There are speculative questions that we can well let alone, but this practical illustration of the grace of Jesus Christ we want constantly to enforce.

Active Members.

C. H. WETHERBE.

Those who are designated as being active members of a church are quite generally regarded with much more favor than are the apparently inactive ones. Pastors, as a rule, set a higher value on the active members than they do on

those who are called "inactive members"? It is commonly taken to mean that such ones participate in those forms of Christian work to which they may be adapted or believe that they are adapted to. They steadily attend all of the services of the church. They make a practice of being present at the mid-week prayer meeting, even if they do not always directly participate in the services. If the active member be a woman, she is connected with the local missionary society, if there be one, and she is sure to be present at each meeting, unless she be especially hindered. Now, such members are generally praised for their religious activity, and they are preferred to the inactive ones; but it has recently forcibly occurred to me that too high an estimate is often placed upon the merely active members of churches, or at least many who are active in certain directions. Bear in mind that there are even more important elements in the character of a member of a church than activity in religious affairs. There are thousands of church members who, although exceedingly active in attending the appointments of their church, are destitute of the great essentials of Christian character.

I know several members of a church who are very active in all of the forms of religious work which that church undertakes, and yet they are distinctly devoid of honesty, veracity and true Christian love. Two of them are women in middle life, occupying offices in the church and its affiliated societies, and outwardly they seem very zealous in serving the good cause, yet both of them have frequently proved themselves to be thoroughly unworthy of the confidence of those who know their real traits of character. And the same thing is true of another member, a man who actively occupies prominent offices in the church. It would seem that these people suppose that their religious activity atones for any moral deficiency to which they may be subject; if so, they are awfully deceived. Active church members are very desirable, but they need to possess genuine Christian character if they would make their activity count in favor of Christ's cause.

Song in the Night.

SEVEN men were buried beneath thousands of tons of rock which fell without a moment's warning in a Cornish tin mine.

Willing hands soon began the work of rescue, though all despaired of finding any one alive.

Their worst fears were not quite realized. One man was found, and was removed from his comrades uninjured, the rocks having formed an arch over him.

After two days the men who were at work, having been greatly encouraged by finding one man alive, called very loudly to ascertain whether others were alive and could speak. One man answered. He was an active Christian, and a Sunday-school superintendent.

"Are you alone?" asked some one.

"No; Christ is with me," was the answer.

"Are you injured?" was the next question.

"Yes," replied the imprisoned man, "my legs are held fast by something."

Then, in a feeble voice he sang:—

"Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O, abide with me."

They heard no more from him. Two days later they found him with his legs crushed by a huge rock which rested on them; but it was known from his life and his last words that he had gone to be "forever with the Lord."

When he was buried, his funeral was attended by hundreds of people. According to the local custom, they carried the casket through the streets with their hands; and on the way to the cemetery, and also at the graveside, his favorite hymns were sung. All were weeping as they finally sung the hymn which was last upon his lips, "Abide with Me"; and many felt the desire of their own hearts expressed in the words—

"In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me."

—*Rev. William J. Hart, in C. E. World.*

A FAVORITE.

"I can't understand why Mrs. Day is such a general favorite," the stranger remarked, looking with puzzled eyes after the plain, poorly dressed little woman who had just left them. "She isn't a particularly bright talker. There's nothing noticeable about her anyway, yet everyone I've met seems to love her."

"If you saw her a half-dozen times you would understand," was the prompt reply. "She has two of the greatest charms in the world—a beautiful and sincere humility and an utter freedom from envy. I never saw anyone who was happier over other people's happiness. It seems as if she has cleared herself out of the way and is utterly free to rejoice with others. She has made me understand, as no one ever did before, how the meek may inherit the earth. She inherits all the joys of all the lives in our village."

It was a beautiful picture of one of earth's conquerors. There are many ways of joy—courage, patience, perseverance, high ambition—these all have their rewards. But in all the world there is no road where joy so often passes as that of the "heart at leisure from itself." The time that we might have for people, the time that we might have for God, if only self were shut from the heart!—*Selected.*

FOLLY OF ATHEISM.

Someone tells of a man going out under the starlit skies and looking up into the great infinite blue above him, and seeing the splendid constellation of worlds on worlds, and realizing that the unthinkable spaces beyond were filled with suns, and worlds, and systems, all moving in perfect order and harmony, all obeying some stupendous universal law. And then this man, who from the time he was a child on the nursery floor, could not see a ball roll across the carpet without instantly asking, "Who did it?" declared, in full view of this glorious nightly panorama, that nobody did it; that these brilliant orbs were simply evolved; that they had no creator, no ruler, no planner but chance. And God looked down from behind the stars and simply said: "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"

Rev. H. Clay Trumbull tells the following good story of Mr. Moody: "In Moody's earlier days, in Chicago, an over-zealous critic, who was not an over-zealous worker, took Moody to task for his defects in speech. 'You oughtn't to attempt to speak in public, Moody; you make many mistakes in grammar.' 'I know I make mistakes,' said Moody, 'and I lack a great many things; but I'm doing the best I can with what I've got. But, look here, my friend, you've got grammar enough; what are you doing with it for Jesus?' It is not often that the grumblers who do no work are so well rebuked.