

The Solitude We Need.

AMID the rush and tumult of the world in our days, it is increasingly difficult to secure that seclusion which is necessary to the development of the inner life. The time which one may wrest from the claims of business at the beginning or close of the day for quiet meditation upon divine things and communion with God is a season of inestimable value, but we require something more. Often the time when we feel the need of solitude the most is when it is impossible to secure it—in the midst of the cares and perplexities and perturbations of our daily occupations. A writer in *Harper's Bazaar* gives us this ingenious suggestion made in that curious production called "Flim-Flams."

The hero of this work was tender-eared. He found no end to all those kinds of small noises which play on the finely organized ears of a literary man like the storms on an Æolian harp. His unsteady brain was long the unhappy victim of his eyes and ears. At length he divulged that he had made an important discovery. "Solitude," said he, "has long been the catchword through all ages of literary men. Why should they be without a portable solitude? I have actually contrived such a thing, which will serve in all times and places." He exultingly held up something, which, having clapped upon his head, the latter disappeared. "Here is solitude!" It was a long, triple-quilted cap, which came down an inch over his eyes and quite covered his ears, in which parts it was stuffed with great care. Furnished with this, the inventor claimed that a man need not travel three hundred miles in quest of a solitude, but could find it at once, even in the heart of noisy London.

This magic extinguisher has not come into general use, nor is it likely to, for the reason that the stillness we need is not so much outward as inward. The cap could shut out the discordant noises of the world, but it could not bestow immunity from the disturbances that arise from the soul that is shut in. The best stillness is that which comes to the soul that has found the peace that abides at the heart of all things—the peace of God. In the midst of the daily "drive" one may have within a "secret place" into which he may enter at any moment and find the wonderful calm which the presence of God makes.

Dr. Bonar tells of a Glasgow merchant who, as he walked the busy streets with a friend, would sometimes say, "Gang on a wee, the Maister wants to speak wi' me." And there amid the clangor and bustle the soul of the servant held converse with the King. This practice of the presence of God is what we require to cultivate amid the pressure of our days, so that in the noise and whirl of daily duties we may enjoy moments of refreshing that will sanctify and dignify every task.

If the Presence is not within, He can never be found without. But if the heart holds Him, then all things bring to us the consciousness of His nearness. A beautiful incident is recorded in

Tennyson's biography that shows the deep devotional spirit of the great poet. As he was walking one day with a favorite niece on the beautiful downs of the Isle of Wight, with the sounding sea ever in their ears, and God's bright skies and plains above and about them, he said to her.

"God is with us now on this down, just as truly as Christ was with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus. We cannot see Him, but the Father and the Saviour and the Spirit are nearer, perhaps, now than then to those who yearn for Him."

"I said," writes the niece, "that such a near, actual presence would be awful to most people."

"Surely the love of God takes away and makes us forget all our fear," answered Tennyson. "I should be sorely afraid to live my life without God's presence, but to feel that He is by my side now, just as much as you are—that is the very joy of my heart."

"And I looked on Tennyson as he spoke," continues his companion, "and the glory of God rested on his face, and I felt that the presence of God overshadowed him."

Aggressive Christianity.

THE spirit of the gospel is the spirit of conquest. The "Forward Movements" which are being organized by all the churches but indicate the essential character of true religion. These are stirring times among all denominations. The ecclesiastical atmosphere is electric with energy and tremulous with campaign cries. The Church has heard the divine voice saying, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion!" and everywhere we see the armies of the Lord preparing for a distinct advance, lured on by promises of glorious spiritual victories.

Aggressive movements are being planned for the missionary fields. The sinews of war are being provided by means of "Century Funds." And accompanying all there is a widespread expectation of spiritual awakening within the churches through the bestowal of the Spirit. In religious periodicals the "coming revival" is a common theme. One of the best things we have observed is an article furnished to the *Christian Guardian* by W. Robertson Nicoll, the well-known English editor. It is worthy of being widely repeated, and it is suggestive enough and comprehensive enough to be taken as a program for aggressive work by our Christian Endeavor societies.

Mr. Nicoll has unlimited confidence that the next revival will be the result of the proclamation of the gospel of a crucified Christ. "The preaching will be the preaching of the Cross, the preaching of mercy and judgment, not of mere mercy alone, but the mercy of God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing to men their trespasses. I say that no other gospel has been preached to the reviving of the church. This is the gospel of all the great evangelists."