

The Home Mission Journal.

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he cuts deep. Self must go out, that Jesus may come in and possess us. And our only ambition must be that when the Master looks down on us, he may say, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye are bearing much fruit." That will be a first instalment of heaven.

OUR NEW SERIAL.

Rail-rading with Christ.

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CHAPTER I.

BRAVE ENOUGH TO SAY "NO!"

GOME, Jack, and have a drink!" No, thank you, Bill! I don't believe in that sort of thing!"

A chorus of derisive cries greeted this reply. In front of a gayly decorated saloon a number of rough men were standing. One of these tipplers had asked John Benton to have a drink. When John replied that he did not believe in tippling, the retort came quickly, "How long since, Jack?"

The taunt was a cruel one. John Benton had been a hard drinker. With some of the men who were now ridiculing him, he had in days gone by, of which he shuddered to think, loafed and drunk many precious hours away.

But the grace of God had made a new man out of the old John Benton, and when he became converted, John was converted through and through. Everybody understood at once that somehow he had become a changed man. The honest blue eyes that threatened to become habitually bloodshot, the handsome face that was fast coarsening, and the manly firm that had begun to contract an unseemly stoop, regained their former charm and simple dignity. The whole John Benton straightened up.

Yet some of Benton's old cronies resolved that they would, if possible, have Benton back again with them in their own evil haunts. So they jeered at his new-found faith, called him a cautious sacker; or, taking a more stealthy and dangerous course, pretending in a friendly fashion to be seeking his welfare, while secretly setting trap after trap for his feet. Constantly were Benton's new "principles" ridiculed, and many were the entangling debates which his old cronies sought to have with him. Again and again was he asked to have "just one more drink," or advised, if he would not actually "break" his temperance resolution, at least to "crack" them a little. But through the steady supply of heavenly grace, frequently asked for in humble prayer, Benton was enabled bravely and persistently to answer all solicitations with a decided "No!" As he told the brethren whom he met in the neighborhood prayer-meetings which he loved to frequent when off duty, he was seeking grace to "run from crossing to crossing," and was living his life "on the block system."

Sometimes when a few of the hands gathered in the round-house, the coarse talk would be interlarded with uncomplimentary allusions to Benton. It was generally agreed that Benton was a milk-sop, lacking in "sand," although a cautious dissent from this opinion was expressed by the gray-haired old engineer of a yard-engine who observed laconically, "Don't you be too sure, boys! As folks say out West, you can't tell

from the looks of a toad how far he will jump!"

The leader of Benton's critics was a burly, blustering engineer by the name of Bill Summers; who one day at the round-house expressed his estimate of John Benton's character by growling out, "Jack used to be a man who could swear and drink and gamble and drive an engine for all the machine was worth; but now that them pious chaps has got hold of him, he isn't worth a broken coupler on a scrapheap! The go and the grit is all out of him!"

It happened that just then Benton came along. He was about to take his engine out for the morning run. "I'll test him!" cried Summers, with a chuckle, to his companions.

"Well, Jack," exclaimed Summers, in a louder tone, "You don't swear nor drink, nor go off picnicking Sundays any more, and I hear that you are losing your spunk in other ways, too. I don't suppose that nowadays you'd do a thing like that brisk fireman of No. 20, the Limited, that layed out on the engine the other day and was a-fixing the headlight when they were coming eastward seventy miles an hour on that piece of down-grade of Walnut Siding? That was what I call sand! But I don't suppose that you would be up to such a thing now, seeing that you have got religion, and are as pious as a parson?"

Benton's face flushed. The old John Benton would have knocked Summers down. But the new John Benton stood and reflected and prayed fast and hard, though silently, for restraining grace. He perfectly well knew that a score of scornful eyes were closely reading his face. He knew also how thoroughly rail-rading men, who are always in danger, despise cowardice and lack of nerve. But he very well knew, too, the circumstances under which Mike Harrity, the fireman, had exposed himself to danger that day on the locomotive of the Limited. It was simply an act of bravado. The headlight required no attention whatever, and Harrity ran that great risk simply to win a wager. Moreover, the big engine was rocking and pounding so that Mike, as a matter of fact, narrowly escaped being dashed to instant destruction, and when, half-dead with fear and his loose jacket nearly blown by ribbons by the rush of the wind as the train flew along, he managed to crawl back into the cab, he confessed to the engineer that never again, unless it were a matter of stern duty, would he do such a thing. Benton knew all this; and since he was an honest man he felt that if he said anything in reply to Summer's insolent question he must say what he believed.

"Summers, I think Mike did a very foolish thing! He may thank God that he escaped with his life! And," added Benton with a quiet fearlessness of tone, "as for your saying that I have 'got religion,' it's rather religion that has got me. Religion's the only thing that holds me up in the right path!" Then, with an impulsive earnestness, Benton exclaimed, with a tone and gesture that were often recalled in after years by more than one of those present: "Boys, I would that the religion of Jesus Christ had 'got' you all!"

A howl of derisive laughter greeted these words. Summers himself was especially noisy and insulting. But the new John, whom God was helping to be patient and to rule his spirit, simply bit his lip and passed quietly on into the round-house.

To be Continued.

Concerning the Baptists, Their Present Status and Principles, Etc.

PART II.

BAPTISTS ARE LEADERS.

THE Baptist churches, by constitution and character, belong with the movement which builds mainly on the spiritual experience; which says that religion is a life rather than a doctrine; is a life and never a sacrament.

The battle lines are now but two, and these irreconcilable conceptions are entering upon a world-wide struggle. The Baptists find themselves with this open field of opportunity, elated with the experience of the past, still able and ready to contend for the spiritual conception of the Gospel of their Lord Jesus Christ.

In this battle they are pre-eminently leaders, for, even if they do not exceed in numbers, they lead in the purity of the thought and effort to establish the spiritual conception of Christianity. The Methodists retaining infant baptism, an implicit denial of the spiritual conception and a remnant of the sacramental idea; and the Disciples, that young giant of a denomination, retaining a quasi sacramental idea of baptism as essential to the perfection of faith which saves, can neither one be leaders. It remains for those who hold that Christianity is a life from God, in the soul, through personal faith in Jesus Christ, and hold it in purity and consistency, to accept the leadership and the opportunity, glad for the victories of the past, and determined to win victory in the future.

(a) A not clearly observed, but nevertheless a definite movement of the present day, is the return to the Bible. The growth of interest in Biblical Theology is an evidence of the movement. The very name "Biblical Theology" carries with it a zest of the religious importance to be attached to it. That there were theologies not Biblical, now to be distinguished and recognized as such, by the distinctive name, allied to this new distinctly "Biblical" theology, reports that men are returning to the Bible. The Book has been lifted again in our sight as the measures and test of truth, and every passing year finds an enlarged confidence in it among all, as well as an increased disposition among Christians to measure all truth and practice by its principles.

BIBLE GROWS STRONGER.

And this has progressed contemporaneously with sceptical attacks upon the Bible and its integrity, as well as along with its critical re-examination by friendly scholars. Indeed, I am not sure that the critical examination of the Book by scholars of varied designs, has not arisen from the return to the Book, and the deeply felt need of attesting and confirming its revelation, in order that from the historical, the literary and critical view there might be no reason for doubt, but the most intelligent appreciation of its worth, and of the relative value and authority of its parts. Confident, we may all be, that because of these examinations of the Book, faith in it grows more intelligent and strong. Possibly many suffer reactions of faith upon discovering that intelligent men dared think of examining the Book, as they would any piece of literature; but the final and total result is to establish the Bible, and enforce its truthfulness and authority.

As we interpret ourselves denominationally, and believe that one of the elements of our strength consists in "living by the Book," and in making it the sole, as we believe it is the sufficient, rule of faith and practice, and in laying on the consciences of men no other confession of faith than the Bible,—this return to the Book is another element in our widening opportunity.

The fresh emphasis which all religious thought and life are putting on the ethical quality of Christianity, also contributes to the opportunity of our churches. For this ethical quality of Christianity lies logically next to the conception of Christianity as an experience with God in which a new life is given the soul. And this is so, even if that connection is not always clear in experience.

It is in the immediate relation of persons to a person that moral obligation is in personality. The soul, in its own unhindered touch with God, rises most clearly into the idea of duty, and of ethical qualities in its actions. No man can feel the bond of obligation to a church, or to God through a church, so firmly and persuasively as to God himself, when the soul is conscious of His immediate presence. The ethical qualities of Christianity are best emphasized by means of such a conception of Christianity as brings the soul to the sense of his own unmediated contact with the personal of God.

Make sure that, however good you may be, you have faults; that however dull you may be, you can find out what they are; and that, however slight they may be, you would better make some patient effort to get quit of them.