Stories of Grace and Truth.

The following story was narrated to me by a gentleman who received it at first hand, and to whom I have submitted this manuscript for the verification of the details. What strikes one in following the thread of this incident is the remarkable way in which the Spirit of God works in harmony with the commonest incidents of human life. The whole is so natural, and yet shows so clearly the marks of the supernatural, that one cannot but see how the human and divine are united in all that appertains to man in his relation to God. It is not difficult to grasp the truth of revelation when it has such striking commentaries as these stories of truth and grace, enacted before our eyes every day, afford us.

Here is the story:

During the late Franco-German war a priest, who had been one of the Vatican Council, had been detailed by the Pope to look after the sick and wounded among the French army. He went, accordingly, with the credentials of his appointment, and reported to the proper officer, who directed him to go to a certain village. Wishing for some reason to go elsewhere, in accordance with a previous plan of service, he declined to go to the village indicated by the officer, and started toward the place which he had himself determined to make the seat of his work and ministry. As he proceeded on his road he asked the way, and was directed by a peasant to go on till the road branched and to take the left hand turn, and he would be further directed by the tracks of a man and a hound in the snow. He mistook the direction, and returned to the village to which he had been previously asked to go by the officer, and which had in the meantime fallen into the hands of the Germans. Upon entering the outskirts of the village he was challenged by the sentry, and taken to the officer in command, who, having heard his mission, refused to give him either house or escort until later on in the day. Having thus some time to wait, he turned into a small tavern, where he had heard there were a number of French prisoners, some of whom were wounded and one dying. Some of these prisoners were seated about a table in the public room, drinking, playing, and swearing most terribly. Their blasphemy was something horrible. The priest was so shocked by it that he hardly knew whether to go further in or to retreat, but finally decided to enter. Upon making known his mission, and asking if there was not a dying man in the house, he was directed with a horrible oath to an adjoining room. Entering this room, he saw a man lying on a pallet and apparently dying. If he was shocked at what greeted his ears in the outer room, he was more shocked at the greeting he received from the dying soldier, for, as if irritated by the appearance of a priest, he broke out upon him with a volley of terrible oaths. So fearful was the blasphemy from this wounded and almost dead man, that the priest was dumbfounded, and knew not what to do or say. However, after a moment's pause, and obeying a sudden impulse, he approached the dying man, and, without saying a word, took out his watch and glanced at it intently as if to note the time. Thus he stood, motionless and speechless, for a full minute.

This strange performance on the part of the priest, seemed to arrest the attention and excite the curiosity of the soldier, who paused in his stream of profane abuse, and asked, or rather demanded, of the priest (still with an oath) what he was doing.

"What are you standing there looking at your watch in that way for?"

The priest replied, hardly knowing what or why he said it: "I am going to see the most awful sight that any man can see. I am watching to see your soul pass into hell in five minutes."

This he said in tones of awful solemnity, and without lifting his eyes, or in any leastwise changing his position. This startling reply seemed at once to arrest and change the current of the dying man's thoughts.

For a moment he kept silence, and then in tones of terror-stricken alarm he exclaimed: "To see my soul go into hell in five minutes! My God! what must I do?"

The priest was for a moment at a loss what to answer, but, pondering a moment he was again moved to speak—he hardly knew what or why. A passage of scripture which he had been reading that morning came vividly into his memory, and, obeying the impulse upon him, he solemnly repeated these words: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

As these words were repeated slowly and solemnly, the dying man, apparently in an instant, grasped their import, and, with an eager inquiry, he exclaimed, "Are these words true?"

"Yes," replied the priest, and for the first time he lifted his eyes from the face of his watch to that of the dying man, and continued, "Do you believe them to be true for yourself?"

"Oh, yes," he replied; and there came instantly over his face a wonderful change of expression—a strange look of peace—"I believe them." And raising himself up from his pallet with a last effort, he pointed to the room where his drinking and swearing comrades were, whose blasphemy was still heard, and continued with an eager whisper, "Go in there and tell that to them."

With these words gasped out from his dying lips he fell back on his pallet, dead—let it be hoped like the dying thief (instantly convinced of sin and salvation), saved as a brand plucked from the burning; his soul passing, not into hell, but into paradise that same hour.

The priest was by this time himself in an amazement of mental and spiritual excitement. He was as much dumbfounded at himself, and at the words which he had been led to speak to the dying man, as the dying man had been. The sudden change in the manner of the dying soldier, and his instant acceptance of the offered forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, astonished him; the calm look of peace which swept over and rested upon his face as he died; and his urgent commission to repeat the words to his comrades, all increased his astonishment. Without stopping an instant longer, he rushed through the public room and out of the house; nor did he stop until he reached his own house, returning by the way in which he came.

The priest had been awakened to doubt some of the teachings of his church by what he had seen and heard while attending the Vatican Council at Rome, of which he was a member. What brought matters to a crisis now was seeing the change that came over the dying man simply upon his acceptance of the truth of the gospel without any administration of the rites of the church. Having reached his home, he at once sought the Bible, and, turning up the passages which he had been so strangely led to quote to the dying soldier, he studied them long and intently himself. Previously they had made no impression on his mind when he had read them, just the morning before; but now they were full of strange new meaning to him. He read on and searched the Scriptures, comparing one Scripture with another, until he saw God's way of salvation through simple faith in Jesus Christ; and at once submitted himself to Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness."

As a result of his careful study and his personal surrender to Christ he resolved at once to break with Rome and seek a new fellowship.

So God is still calling out His own from all states and circumstances, and the Word of God is not bound. Surely we may all praise Him and say: "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."—*George F. Pentecost, in Congregationalist.*

Popular Ministers.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

The elder Dr. Stephen H. Tyng—then at the height of his power and popularity—was sitting at my table one day, and I asked him the question, "What is a call to the ministry?" The doctor promptly replied, "It is the capacity to preach the gospel in such a way that people will come to hear you." This apt reply showed the sagacity of the veteran pastor who was then addressing his faithful message to crowds of auditors every Sabbath. Many a godly man who is profound in scholarship and in piety has no gift in attracting immortal souls within the sound of his voice. His ministry is well-nigh a failure. We can do but little good to those who do not like us, and no good at all to those who will not come to hear us. It is of the utmost importance that every ambassador of Jesus Christ should use every *legitimate* method to induce people to like him; in other words, to win their hearts. Then he may hope to win those hearts to the Saviour.

Of course the mere hunger for popular applause from selfish motives is an utter degradation of the ministerial office. Such unsanctified ambition is a cancer that gnaws away the vitals of every man that falls a prey to it. But there is such a thing as a legitimate and laudable desire to be popular. Every minister of God's Word should strive to "commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God," and to "let no man despise him." Soul-*winning* is his business; and he is not likely to win any soul to Christ whom he has not won to such a respect and regard for himself that he can influence that soul. We are told that the "common people heard Jesus *gladly*." This does not refer to the vulgar in point of caste; it signifies *the multitude*, the *mass* of people irrespective of social condition. It means that in the best sense of the word, Jesus Christ was a popular preacher. He reached the popular heart; and great multitudes thronged to listen to the marvellous Being who spake as never man spake.

It is a very current error that fearless ministers destroy their popularity by preaching pungent and unpalatable truth. The opposite is true. Cowards are despised; and courage always commands respect. That very man, Dr. Tyng, was a most fearless denouncer of fashionable sins, and a faithful expounder of the pure gospel; and great crowds hung upon his eloquent tongue. It used to be said that the brilliant and heroic Dr. Cheever drove his congregation away in New York by his bold denunciation of negro slavery. That theory does not hold water; for at that very time, Mr. Beecher, who was an equally zealous opponent of slavery, was attracting crowds that overflowed upon the sidewalk. It was the "*how*" that made the difference. My revered and beloved friend *overdosed* his congregation with perpetual philippics against the great abomination; and did not give his people enough of those rich experimental and spiritual discourses which no man could excel in America. Beefsteak is excellent fare; but beefsteak alone three times a day, and on every day, is rather too much of a good thing. The mistake of the heroic pastor of the "Church of the Puritans" during a *few years* of his noble life, was simply a mistake of *judgment* as to methods. All honor to the grand old man in the placid retirement of his sunset years! He has wrought a magnificent lifework. Prof. J. Addison Alexander once said to me in the year 1852, "When I have a spare Sabbath in New York, I always go to hear Dr. George B. Cheever." He had not yet become too much a man of one idea in the pulpit. Courage is always popular; but it must be regulated by sound judgment.

To gain the ears of the people, and to win the affections of people, is as much a part of every Christian minister's duty as it is to study his Bible. What is the use of studying the Bible if we cannot get people to hear us expound it? The secret of a true, legitimate and permanent popularity is this: First, keep your heart strong and sweet, and loving and courageous, by a constant life in Jesus Christ; and secondly, *take a personal interest in everybody.* To every human being on this globe nobody is quite as important as his own self. This is not vanity, or egotism, or self-conceit; it is an *instinct.* God's solemn charge to every immortal child of His is "take heed to yourselves." Self-denial is Christian; self-neglect is destruction. The poor boy who rolls in the ash-barrels from the sidewalk is a more important person to himself than Prince Bismarck. What becomes of the German Empire is of less consequence to that little fellow than that he should earn a dime to buy his breakfast. That instinct is universal. Every ambassador of Christ should avail himself of this instinct, and *use it.* He should aim to find out the personal character, condition and needs of every person within his reach. He should put himself into *personal sympathy* with everybody. A congregation will stand hard pounding and plain truths from the minister they love. And every one who is called to preach the gospel is bound to preach it winsomely as well as boldly—whether his parish be in the backwood, or in the rural village, or in the crowded hive of a great city. Popularity is power. Use it for God.—*Evangelist.*

Family Prayers.

There is one mark of a household in which God is known and loved, which is too often wanting in our day; I mean the practice of family prayer. Depend upon it, the worth of a practice of that kind can only be measured by its effects during a long period of time; and family prayers, though occupying only a few minutes, do make a great difference in any household at the end of the year. How, indeed, can it be otherwise, when each morning, and perhaps each evening, too, all the members of the family—the old and the young, the parents and the children, the master and the servants—meeting on a footing of perfect equality before the Eternal, in whose presence each is as nothing, yet to whom each is so infinitely dear that He has redeemed by His blood each and all of them? How must not the bad spirits that are the enemies of pure and bright family life flee away—the spirits of envy and pride and untruthfulness and sloth, and the whole tribe of evil thoughts—and make way for His presence in the hearts of old and young alike, who, as He brings us one by one nearer to the true end of our existence, so does He alone make us to be "of one mind in a house" here, within the narrow presence of each home circle, and hereafter in that countless family of all nations and tongues, which shall dwell with Him, the universal Parent of all eternity?—*Canon Liddon.*

— The river Nile for a thousand miles above its delta receives no tributaries, and constantly decreases in volume. Flowing through the trackless sands of the Egyptian desert, transforming with its mighty tide the barren wastes into rich and fertile gardens, it is devoured by the very land it came to bless. Every mile growing smaller and smaller, continually absorbed by the boundless, sandy plain, it seems almost a miracle that it is able to push through to the sea at last. But the power of the far-away, snow-capped mountains is behind the Egyptian river. The supply of eternally melting snow from interior mountains is greater than all the exhaustion of the desert, and the power of the mountain impels the victorious river to the sea. So is our life ever swallowed up by the world it was sent to bless. We are absorbed by our surroundings, and no man who depends on his own resources can ever reach the destiny for which he was created. But when we lift up our eyes to the hills from whence cometh our help, when we feel that from the great Christ-life a tide of strength and fullness is ever passing through our human channel, then we are stronger than the things about us—we have victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. No longer, then, do we constantly fear exhaustion. No longer do we live from hand to mouth. No more do we work in desultory, extemporaneous fashion. Sure of the source of our life, we are sure of its support and final triumph.—*Rev. W. H. P. Faunce.*

— A Japanese senator recently got hold of a copy of an exposition of part of the Bible. Reading it attentively he pronounced Christianity a fine thing in theory, but the question was, would it work practically? Thinking about it he became dissatisfied with his life, and while in this state took a trip from Okayama to Osaka. On the same steamer was Miss Barrows, and he heard she was a Christian, and so watched her. Her deportment so impressed him, that, though not a word passed between them, he was convinced that Christianity was right in practice as well as good in theory, and on returning home, he hunted up a missionary and made public profession of faith, and has since been active in persuading others. Miss Barrows did not know she was watched, or that anything specially depended on her deportment. Had she behaved as many church members behave, especially when away from home, this Japanese senator would have been repelled, and would have probably reached the conclusion that however fair Christianity might be in theory, it was a failure in practice. We never know what eyes are upon us. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—*Western Recorder.*

BECOMING LIKE CHRIST.—A beautiful statue stands in the market-place. It is that of a Greek slave-girl, but she is well dressed, tidy and handsome. A dirty, forlorn slave-girl passes by. She sees the statue, stops and gazes at it in rapt admiration. She goes home, washes her face, and combs her hair. Another day she stops, in passing, to look at the statue. Next day her tattered clothes are washed and mended. Each day she stops to look at the statue, and each next day she has imitated some of its beauties, until the dirty ragged slave becomes completely transformed; she becomes another girl. This is the way Christ teaches. He does not hurl his own individuality upon others; He simply lives and works and loves before men, not to be seen of them, but to inspire them to a holy emulation.

— Christ has given us abundant sunlight on many things, but at the same time He has undoubtedly deepened the shadow. He might have told us everything, but He deliberately refused to do so. Something, however, He has told. He has spoken of mercy unbounded, to the weak, the frail, the wayworn, the lowly, the repentant. He has also spoken, as to high-handed and determined sinners, words of severity the like of which had never before, have never since, been spoken by man. That tender, pitiful, merciful, kind, sympathetic One has left us gracious messages which support and comfort us, when otherwise we should quite give way; but He has spoken—and it is well said He could not have meant merely to frighten us—He has spoken of the "worm that never dieth, and the fire that never shall be quenched." This, then, is what He has impressed upon us.—*Canon Knox Little.*

How Rod Was Led.

Two ladies stood by Sue Ingram's counter waiting for change.

"What delightful meetings we are having!" Mrs. Walker said.

"Indeed we are," responded Mrs. Currier. "It does my heart good to see the young people so thoughtful and earnest. I've been feeling so anxious all day about one in particular: Rod Carter."

Sue gave a little start as she caught the name, but neither lady noticed it.

"He used to be in my Sunday-school class, you know," continued Mrs. Currier, "but he has not been much lately; he has gotten in with a set who do not help him much, I fancy. Some of our boys coaxed him into one of the meetings, however, and he is really very much interested. I hoped he would decide the question last night; I could see he was just halting between two opinions, but he was not quite ready to decide. The worst of it is he said he could not come to-night, as he had a previous engagement."

Sue started again at this and looked a trifle conscious.

"I'm so afraid he will be drawn back again," she heard Mrs. Currier say next. "Somehow I have a feeling that if he willfully stays away to-night, and puts off deciding until a more convenient season, the Spirit will cease to strive with him—now, any way. I am so anxious about it."

"Here's your change, madam," said Sue, just then.

There were tears in gentle Mrs. Currier's eyes as she turned to take it.

"My dear," she said, obeying a sudden impulse as she glanced at Sue's saucy, piquant face, "my dear, don't forget your responsibility in influencing your friends and associates. It will be a dreadful thing at that last day to have any one say we led them astray, away from the right; will it not?"

Sue had no answer ready for this query, and the ladies passed out.

"So Rod is interested in religion, is he?" she thought, as she put things to rights. "Wonder what Mrs. Currier would have said if she had known his engagement was to take me to the theatre. I suppose she would have besought me to let him off and send him to meeting. Perhaps I ought; but I don't get very much fun, and I don't see why he can't decide before or after just as well. Still," and Sue fairly shuddered at the thought, "it would be awful if he should get over it at the play and them blame me for it."

All day long Sue was perplexed and troubled, and as unlike her usual merry, saucy self as possible.

"Whatever in the world am I going to do?" she thought as she started for home at night. "I wish Mrs. Currier had gone somewhere else shopping. I don't see what earthly difference it makes; the meetings last a week longer, and Rod can go every evening for all of me, but if I give up the theatre to-night the dear knows when I'll get another chance to go. I guess if Mrs. Currier had to work as I do, and didn't have any more fun than I do, she wouldn't think it such a simple matter to give it up. It's all nonsense any way. I'm not responsible for Rod's not deciding. He has had time enough this week but he hasn't improved it, and very likely he wouldn't to-night, even if he went to the meeting. I'm not going to give up my good time unless he asks me to; so, now!"

And having come to this decision, Sue hastened her steps and tried to think no more about it. But in spite of her best endeavors she felt anything but comfortable as she made preparations to go. She even kept Rod waiting fully ten minutes while she stood in her own room, hat and jacket on, and thought it all over again. It ended, however, in her coming down with a half-reckless look, and they started out.

But Sue found her companion very sober and absent-minded, yet while it increased her own disquiet of mind, she apparently did not notice it, but laughed and chatted incessantly.

"We've lost our car and will have to wait a few minutes," said Rod, as they reached the corner. "What got into you, Sue? I never knew you to keep anybody waiting before, especially when there was a good time on hand."

"Didn't you? Well, there always has to be a first time, you know," was Sue's only reply; and then for a few moments neither of them spoke.

Sue seemed to see Mrs. Currier's earnest face, and to hear her saying, "Don't forget your responsibility; it will be a dreadful thing to hear any one say we led them away from the right."

Rod was trying in vain to quiet his troubled conscience.

"There's no use in my feeling so uncomfortable. I'll go to the meeting tomorrow night, and decide one way or the other and be done with it."

But, suggested something within, suppose something should happen before; things do to people many times when they least expect them. What if it should be too late to-morrow night?

Rod shook himself impatiently.

"Here's the car," he said, with a look of relief; but just then they both heard the church bell. "Don't forget," it said to Sue; "Come now," it seemed to Rod to plead.

For an instant their eyes met, and Sue, with quick intuition, read the struggle in Rod's face. "It will be a dreadful thing to hear any one say we led them astray." How those words rang in Sue's ears!

"Yes," she said to herself, "it would be horrible, and I will not run the risk of it for all the fun in the world; if Rod goes away from the right it shall not be my fault."

The car was close to them, and Rod put out his hand to help Sue, but she drew back.

"We won't go to the theatre to-night; we will go to the meeting, and if I were in your place, Rodney, I wouldn't hesitate any longer. I'd make up my mind for the right to-night."

Rod turned and looked at Sue, too surprised to speak.

"How did you know?" he asked presently.

"Oh, I found it out," she answered, as they went up the church steps. It was an intensely solemn meeting; the text was, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." It came to Rod like a command.

After the sermon, when the minister came down from the pulpit, and, looking anxiously into the faces before him, asked if there were not some who would choose now whom they would serve, Rod was one of the first to rise.

"I have chosen Christ for my Master," he said, and there was a real ring of joy in his voice, "and, God helping me, I will serve Him faithfully all the rest of my life."

Two heads bent suddenly as he spoke. "Thank God!" said Mrs. Currier, softly, to herself; but Sue said never a word; only a sudden rush of tears blinded her eyes.

"I can never thank you enough, Sue, for your help to-night," said Rod, as they walked home together. "I cannot tell you how happy and thankful I am that I have decided."

"I am very glad also; but you need not thank me, Rod, for I think I helped myself to decide, as well as you," answered Sue. "I did not do anything worth mentioning for you, yet it made me happier than I ever was before, I think, to feel that I had helped even the least bit. If God will only accept and help me, I want to serve him, too."—*Kate Sumner Gates, in Our Youth.*

Idle Reading.

The time wasted by young and old in the occupation they know and speak of as reading, is a serious consideration. In this busy world, where so much is necessarily left undone, continual waste of time, capacity and energy is a wrong to ourselves and our neighbors. Idle reading is mental dissipation, and the effects on those who indulge in it are almost as soul-destroying as habitual intoxication. Habitual idle readers soon make reading the end and aim of their lives. They crave more and more in quantity; they become less and less able to distinguish quality; their brain becomes stupefied or aimlessly excited, according to the special qualities of their favourite mental tipple, and their leisure hours are wholly unprofitable, although all spent in the apparently innocent and improving occupation of reading.

Such readers utterly lose their mental independence and self-respect, and are content to live wholly upon the brains of others. They neither act nor think. Page upon page is absorbed without a single mental picture being formed of the ideas embodied in the printed words. After a time it really makes no difference what such people read, and, unfortunately, there is always enough printed to satisfy their most exorbitant call for "More, more."

Unfortunately, also, this kind of demand creates a supply of printed matter that would be as little missed from the world of literature as its consumers would be from the busy world of work and progress.

It is often said, that it is impossible to read too much; but this is a great mistake. Reading too much is far more mischievous than reading too little. To reading just for the sake of reading, without putting into action any truth acquired, without learning to sift and weigh opinions of different minds, without becoming critical as to form and manner of different writers, without getting at any facts that may be made useful in daily occupations, is an idle waste of time and nothing more, and it makes woeful want of character and usefulness.

This great evil of idle reading may generally be traced to the usual cause of all wrong, ignorance, and those who are not ignorant are responsible for it. Children are allowed to read anything, so long as they are quiet; older children are allowed to read anything, if they are only at home and supposed to be out of mischief; and later in life those who happen to have the passion for reading instead of the passion for gambling, or drink, indulge it until it controls them, body and soul, and makes them the cause of the flood of useless, if not absolutely harmful, reading matter, which is a worry to publishers, booksellers, and those whose mission it is to separate the wheat from all this chaff for the benefit of the few stirring working men and women who have no time to read just for the sake of reading.

There are very few books worth reading that are not worth buying and owning. Imagine these idle readers buying and keeping the books they swallow.—*Literary News.*

Self-Condemned.

One summer evening an old farmer sat on his door-step smoking a pipe before going to bed. Presently a tramp appeared, and said "Good evening, sir."

"Good evening," answered the farmer.

"I have been walking a long distance," said the tramp, "and if you will permit me, I'll sit a few minutes on your door-step."

"All right," was the answer.

The two men fell into conversation, and as the farmer discovered his guest to be an intelligent man, their talk was continued until a late hour.

"Would you mind giving me a mug of cider?" asked the tramp at length.

"Not at all," said the farmer; "I will do it with pleasure."

The cider was procured and disposed of in a summary fashion, and then came the next request:

"I've travelled a good distance to-day, and I should like very much to lodge with you, if you have no objections."

"All right," answered the farmer. "I can accommodate you."

Meanwhile his wife, who had long before retired, and was listening to the conversation from her bed-room, called out, "No you wont; I wont have him in here. Come, husband, it is time for you to come in and lock up."

"Madam," said the tramp seriously, turning in the direction of the voice, "you should not speak so abruptly to a stranger. You might be entertaining an angel unawares."

"I ain't a mite afraid," returned the old lady calmly. "Angels don't come round begging cider after dark."

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SATIN RAYE DRESS GOODS—31 inches;
COLORED FRENCH SERGES and BEIGES, in all the leading colors;
NUNS VEILINGS in Black, White, Cream, Cardinal, Pink and Blue;
BLACK FRENCH MERINOES;
BLACK and COLORED CASHMERES, Union and All-Wool;
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