

**Helpful Lives.**

When we have given our money to help the poor and spoken our most encouraging words to help the weak, we have not yet exhausted all our resources. A true Christian may help others as much by his life as by his words and gifts. Nay, the principal contribution which anyone can make to the life of the world is not his word or deed, but himself.

It is a vain thing to try to set a good example without a good heart. A life which is not merely acted is not genuine, and the counterfeit will soon be detected. Artificial lives are like artificial flowers which one sees in the market. They are beautiful to the eye, but shed no fragrance on the air. The bees never hover about them. A good life proceeding from a good heart creates a spiritual atmosphere which greatly affects everyone who comes within its range.

It is said that the physical atmosphere exerts a powerful effect on the bodies and minds of men. The physician knows that his patients will be more comfortable to-day because the sky is clear and the atmosphere is not murky and heavy. The police in Paris and London know that there will be a larger number of suicides in those great cities to-day because the atmosphere is heavy with fogs and vapors.

So it is with the spiritual atmosphere. Children who are brought up in an atmosphere which is free from the fogs of skepticism, doubt, selfishness, and vice, and charged with the ozone of love and truth, will grow to be stronger and better men and women than others. Some children grow up in a mercenary atmosphere, some in a literary atmosphere, some in an atmosphere of pride and vanity, some in an atmosphere of sin and vice. There is little hope for them. Let parents create an atmosphere in the home by pure lives which will save their children from evil. The church can create an atmosphere in the community where it is located which will exert a powerful influence over the lives of the people. It cannot be done by good preaching alone, or by good singing, or by generous giving, or by regular attendance on the means of grace. These are all good. The chief power of a church is in the lives of its members. Here is the hiding of its power.—Selected.

**Better Than Taking a City.**

The Mousers were coming over the hill at the rate of millions to the minute, it appeared, yet none seemed destined to touch the broad-shouldered Major who paced up and down behind the prone firing line. There had been an official tiff between that same Major and a certain Capt. Warren at Tampa, before our regiment had embarked on the transports for Cuba. This quarrel had made them rather bitter, and since then not a word had passed between them except on business. Capt. Warren's troop was on the firing line, and, of course, the Captain was standing behind them, encouraging and directing the brave men at his feet. Now and then a shell, fired from within the city, came over us, doing no damage beyond increasing the uneasy feeling they had already caused. Major Arnold was giving us the range, and as lieutenant of the troop, I had to repeat it, so our men could take advantage.

"Steady, men! Keep cool, make every shot count!" This seemed almost useless advice to men who had been waiting for this chance all day.

"One thousand yards!" called the Major; then, "Make it eleven hundred."

We were getting their range down fine, but they were retaliating in the same way. It was as much as one's life was worth to stand upon that hill, yet there those two stood, each oblivious of the presence of the others, yes, even forgetful of self. The hail of bullets was enough to stagger any man, but the two stood there, calling the range and encouraging the firing line. The musketry kept up its incessant rattle.

Major Arnold walked a little beyond his accustomed beat, and came face to face with Capt. Warren before either realized that the other was anywhere near. There was a moment's pause, then both grasped the outstretched hand of the other. To me, who had been present at the quarrel, the act was full of meaning to the others, it meant nothing. Not a word was spoken, and both passed on to the duty before them.

The musketry continued without a pause. "Here, bind up this sergeant's arm!" Hardly were the words out of his mouth before the Major fell shot through the thigh, and was carried to the rear.

The fortunes of war compelled me to bunk with the Captain that night, for one thin poncho was all we had to cover both of us. The excitement of the day made both restless and sleepless. About an hour after lying down I heard my Captain murmur in his sleep, "Thank God, I shook hands with Arnold!"

My thoughts went back to the proverb about conquering one's self and taking a city, and as I turned over to sleep, my last thought that night was one of pride in the two brave men I could number among the list of my comrades.—Exchange.

**Whom to Invite.**

The old minister closed the book and looked around the village church.

"You are told," he said, "when you make a feast to call to it, not your rich neighbors, but the poor, the

maimed and the blind. Now none of you are going to set out a fine dinner or supper this week. Some of us never in our lives gave a great entertainment. Yet the order is to us. I want each one of you when you go home to consider what God has given you beside food with which to make a feast, and who are the poor folk whom you should bid to it."

People glanced, smiled at each other, for the good man was full of queer suggestion. But the idea remained in the minds of some of his hearers, making their Sunday afternoon uncomfortable.

It bothered Phil Dorrance as he sat alone in his room. He usually sat alone except when at his meals. Phil was the blacksmith's son, whom his father, by dint of years of hard work and saving, had sent to College. He was grateful to his father, but he felt his education had made a great gulf between him and the old man. His companions were his classmates. He had meant to spend this afternoon with some of them, discussing a paper he had written on the history of the Reformation. Instead, he took it downstairs to the kitchen where his father and mother in their Sunday clothes sat nodding over the fire. How bare and empty their lives were—work and sleep!

"I want to read you something I have written," he said, cheerily.

They drew up their chairs, their eyes sparkling with pride and delight, and listened with a keen, shrewd, intelligence that surprised him. They were able, too, to correct some mistakes that he had made, and to give him some facts new to him.

"I haven't had as pleasant a day for years, Phil," said the old man, when the paper was finished. His old mother said nothing, but kissed him, her eyes full of tears.

In another farm-house Grace Peel sat, also thinking of the old doctor's suggestion. She was a musician from the city, who cared only for classical music. At home, her playing gave deep pleasure to friends whose musical taste had been cultivated.

"They are my rich neighbors," she thought. Rising, she went to the parlor and opened the piano.

"Suppose," she said, "we sing some hymns—all of us."

"The farmer called in the boys excitedly. 'We haven't had the piano opened since Nancy went away,' he said. 'Come, grandma, I'll move up your chair. You must join in.'"

"They sang 'Jesus, Lover of my Soul,' and 'Nearer my God, to Thee.' Sarah, the black cook, came to the door and threw in a wild note of triumph now and then. The discord sometimes made Grace shiver, but she played on.

Grandma asked for the old hymns she had sung when she was a girl, and the boys for "Hold the Fort."

When the afternoon was over the farmer said to Grace, "It's been a real happy time. You play as well as my daughter Nancy."

Grandma laid her wrinkled hand on Grace's shoulder. "The happy hours are so few at my age!" she said. "God bless you for giving me this one, my child!"

So the minister's suggestion was carried out.—Sel.

**Does Heaven Speak?**

Certain disciples of Confucius once asked that great teacher some questions about death. They were not satisfied with a knowledge bounded by the grave, and wanted to know of the beyond. They were met by an ominous evasion, for the teacher was a real agnostic as to the future of the soul, if it had a future, or if there were a soul. He said, "While you do not know about life, how can ye know about death? I prefer not speaking." When one of his disciples replied, "If you, the master do not speak, what shall your disciples have to record?" he added, "Does Heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses and all things are continually produced, but does heaven say anything? In contrast with this attitude of the Chinese prophet, now full and satisfying are the teachings of Jesus Christ concerning the world to come and eternal life. He did not speculate or reason of those things, but spoke of them with familiarity and confidence as one who knew. He expressed no hope or opinion, but talked of his Father's house just as we do of the house in which we were born, and of the environments of our childhood. The Apostle John, when writing of the blessedness of those who die in the Lord, prefaced it by the words, "I heard a voice from heaven saying," It is only a voice from heaven that can make a declaration like that. The knowledge of another life must always be dim and uncertain unless certified by a revelation from above. Because heaven speaks we therefore know. Agnosticism like that of Confucius must necessarily prevail as to the hereafter, unless we accept with unquestioning faith the word of revelation through which life and immortality are brought to light.—Commonwealth.

**The Stages of Christian Communion.**

BY GEORGE MATHESON, D. D.

Have mercy upon me, O God.—Psalm li. 1.  
That I may know the fellowship with his sufferings.—Philippians iii. 10.

Here are two degrees of Divine communion, its spring and its summer. The first is God's compassion for me; the second is my compassion for God. "Have mercy upon me," said the Psalmist; "Give me fellowship with thy pain," says Paul. And ever is this the se-

quence of the soul's approach to God. I begin by asking his fellowship with me. It is the cry of my springtime. I have been quickened into pain by the new life within me, and I cry for an anaesthetic. I have been taught my weakness by the moment of convalescence, and I cry for a stimulant. The voice of my spirit in the springtime is ever the prayer that God will take my cross. But by-and-by summer comes, and the scene is changed. My spirit takes a leap, a bound. I pass from my cross to God's cross. I have often wondered why Paul said "that I may know the fellowship with his sufferings" instead of "His fellowship with my sufferings." But I do not wonder any more. I have learned the difference between spring and summer. Do you not see it even in the life of home? That little girl is laying all her crosses upon the mother; she would be miserable if the mother did not bear them. But, one day, she will be miserable if the mother does bear them. One day, she will want to lift the mother's cross. One day, her deepest desire will be to have fellowship with the parent's sufferings, to help her burden up the Dolorous Way. And, when that day comes, it will be, both for mother and child, the leafy month of June.

Jesus I have been admitted to thy higher class of communicants! I stood, one day, upon an eminence of the great city, and looked down. I looked upon its sins and sorrows. I saw the squalor beneath the glory, the rags below the costly raiment. I beheld the struggle for survival, the weariness of life, the recklessness that breeds crime; as I beheld I wept. And then I knew that I was bearing thy cross. Then I knew that I was lifting that old, old burden of thine—the burden of Jerusalem that made thee weep. That moment I gained promotion; I passed to the upper form. Hitherto it had been all receiving; I had never given thee a joy; I had been the child bringing its cross to the mother. But now there are to be changed times for me, for thee. Tell me the secret of thy pain; tell me the story of thy grief! I used only to sing, "Safe in the arms of Jesus;" it is no more for me an adequate song. I cannot sleep if thou art suffering in the garden. Rather would I have my arms round thee in the fellowship of pain! My springtime brought rest to the labor of my heart; but my summer glory will be when my heart shall enter into thy labor.—Christian World.

**Heaven a Place.**

A fog bank is a fog bank even though the sun shines on it. There was a crispness in Paul's faith. It was vertebrate. His confidence reached out into the dark, but it moved into the dark on fixed lines. The prospect of entering the other world never seemed to him to necessitate throwing overboard methods of expectation that had served him well prior to his departure. It is clear that, whatever exchange of experience there might be between this world and the next, he never anticipated being surprised, or at least bewildered, by the exchange. Standing by the death-bed of a friend was like going down to the dock and seeing a friend off on an Atlantic steamer, which may cost tears, but is not exactly a funeral. To one who takes the gospel in its easiest sense—which is to say its truest sense—heaven is a place, some place. One of the bitterest elements of grief would be eliminated from the death-bed scene if it were as distinct in our hearts as it is in Scripture that death is embarkation. Select the remotest star in the universe, and if you could suddenly realize that your departed and sainted friend was there, with what overwhelming brightness your whole conception of death and the heavenly world would be transformed, enlivened and beautified. May the Holy Spirit encourage our thoughts to move out cheerily along this line of a sweeter and richer consciousness of the somewhere of the heavenly world; a little of the bitterness be thereby subtracted from the bereavements which have shadowed our past, and our anticipations incline with a firmer confidence toward the city which hath foundations, and toward reunion with those whose bark sped out into the night and over the sea while we stood weeping upon the shore.—Dr. C. H. Parkhurst

**I Have Finished My Course.**

I feel in myself the future life. I am like a forest once cut down; the new shoots are stronger and livelier than ever. I am rising, I know, toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap, but heaven lights me with the reflection of its unknown worlds. You say the soul is nothing but the resultant of the bodily powers. Why, then, is my soul more luminous when my bodily powers begin to fail? Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart. There I breathe at this hour the fragrance of the lilacs, the violets and the roses as at twenty years. The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the words which invite me. It is marvellous, yet simple. It is a fairy tale, and it is history. For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and in verse; history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song—I have tried all. But I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say, like so many others "I have finished my day's work." But I cannot say, "I have finished my life." My day's work will begin again the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight, it opens with the dawn.—Victor Hugo.