

The Value of Cheerfulness.

BY G. R. WHITE.

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Prov. 17:22.

Solomon is still wise. For the world has neither need, nor room for a vinegar visage, much less the church of God. Cheerfulness is not a sin, but it is a sin not to be cheerful. Smiles are the sunshine of life, and when other helpers fail us, it may still be possible to "smile the shadows from the heart." Some of the world's holiest men have been good laughers. There must be something wrong with the man who does not possess or enjoy a smile. God can do but little with that person who has bidden farewell to cheerfulness. He is hardly a man who has ceased to smile. There are three things which differentiate man from all other animals, he makes a fire, he handles tools and he laughs. There should be room in a man's make up for the morality of merriment, for the medical value of cheerfulness, and the religion of a joyous spirit. There are some people who think piety should never smile. They always associate the minister with the undertaker, and the one is about as welcome as the other; and as for the mention of religion, it always suggests a funeral, or the judgment day. They think the more religion you have, the more miserable you must be. There are still others who think that a smile is a proof positive that the heart is still unregenerated. Like the lady who very much feared that her niece had never experienced a work of grace in her heart, and when asked why, she said, "I have noticed that she is as much addicted to laughter as ever." But it is possible for one to be serious and smile. A grave lady once took Mr. Spurgeon to do for getting off so many jokes, and the great man said: "My dear sister, if you only knew the number I am holding back, you would not say one word." One may have a sunny soul, and a serious purpose.

There is a difference between cheerfulness and levity. The mind that is much given to levity is least open to cheerfulness. Levity may be the offspring of sin and wickedness, but cheerfulness is the offspring of virtue. There is no genuine cheerfulness where there is a lack of virtue. Mirth and levity have degenerating effect upon the character, but cheerfulness "doeth good like a medicine." For while mirth is an act, cheerfulness is a habit—the act passes, the habit abides. Mirth is like fire struck out of steel hard to get out, and when got out soon gone, but cheerfulness grows out of character and is a fixed possession, therefore give us cheerfulness. It is good, for it is Godlike. We read of the "ever blessed," i. e. the ever happy God. Some may think that a strange adjective to apply to God. Nevertheless he is a happy God, one who delights in all his works and creatures. Addison says: "Cheerfulness bears the same friendly regard to the mind as to the body. It banishes all anxious care and discontent, soothes and composes the passions, and keeps the soul in perpetual calm." Cheerfulness is what the world needs. It is a grace of prolific growth, and one that will reward careful cultivation. Beecher once said: "If a man has the springs of cheerfulness in him, in the name of God and benevolence let him not stop them. Let him keep them open that they may rather be a source of joy and consolation to his fellow-men." Smile then for God and angels fill your smile! But remember there is an eternal fitness in things; and there is a vast difference between a smile and a chuckle, or a silly grin, which is the product of an empty brain and a thoughtless spirit. There are times and places when even a smile is out of place, and that is just the time when fools have them in abundance. When God is being invoked in prayer, when the funeral procession is marching to the grave, then laughter is out of place. When the prodigal halted before the swine-trough, he was in no condition to smile.

"Nature hath framed some strange fellows in her time: Some that will ever more peep through their eyes And laugh, like parrots, at a bay-piper; And others of such vinegar aspect, That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile, Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable."

Solomon declares there is a time for everything, so there is a time to be sober as well as a time to smile. When the spirit is crushed and the heart sore, God gives tears; but those he can, and does, turn into jewelled mercies, as they give vent to the pent up grief and save the spirit from utter collapse. And it is the giver of smiles who is the giver of tears, and he is the same good God in the gift of either.

A smile to be of value must be of the right kind and in the right place. It must have behind it a noble spirit and a true heart. To laugh at a funeral is idiotic—out of place. One has well said: "To do good laughter must be with and not at others." Never laugh at the misfortune of others in person or manner. Never laugh at the feebleness of old age, it is wretched humor, —God frowned upon such an act in the days of Elisha the prophet, when he sent two bears and tore forty and two of the scoffers limb by limb. It is the mark of a true man to smile and laugh at proper times and places. You see the fool's laughing muscles have never been properly developed, hence his laugh is only a chuckle

that strikes on the nerve centres like the thud of a hangman's beam when the rope is cut.

We owe it to ourselves to be cheerful. Do not cherish your griefs, "they do but wear out the finer springs of the soul," which belong in the services of God and man.

We must have our times of grief, but let them be short. Some people would make prominent their grief as a religious duty. "Have you not forgiven God yet," said one lady to another who for years had clad herself in crape. God is not unkind in taking our loved ones to himself. We must not criticise the acts of God. "He is too wise to err, too good to be unkind. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, he will sustain you. Be just as hopeful, cheerful and truthful as you can. If God can guide the universe, he can guide your affairs to the best possible advantage. Keep mind and spirit in a hopeful frame in order to do your best. For the "material medica" of cheerfulness doeth good. Never say a discouraging word while in this sanitarium. You are all here for one purpose," is the motto over the inside door of one of the celebrated sanitariums in the United States. It is the cheerful air and hopeful surroundings of such a place that gives back health rather than the free use of drugs. Be cheerful and nature will do her very best for you and she is a skilled physician. We thank God for the triumphs in medical skill and the improved and kind treatment of the sufferer. The woman in the Scripture suffered much from many physicians. She feared and suffered more from her doctors than from her disease. But the first person we all want when sick is the doctor. And if he be wise, he will come with as much good cheer in his countenance as the exigencies of the case will permit. "For a merry heart doeth good like a medicine," and sometimes better. Smiles and exercise heal their thousands, while frowns and inactivity wound many spirits. Many people who are half sick and the other half miserable would be helped mightily if they would take a week off and smile ten times per day, they would find it hard work for the first day or two, but repeated action grows not only easy, but pleasant. The calamity criers in state and church should lock themselves up until they learn to smile, and they would see a new world when they come out. What shall we do with these sad spirits? Here is a recipe: "Take one tablespoonful of cheerfulness three times a day before meals—shake well before taken,"—"For a merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

"Never go gloomily, man with a mind,
Hope is a better companion than fear;
Providence, ever benignant and kind,
Gives with a smile what we take with a tear.

All will be right,
Look to the light.
Morning was ever the daughter of night:
All that was black will be all that is bright,
Cheerily, cheerily, then, cheer up!"

We owe it to others to be cheerful. It is quite evident that God meant that we should smile and cry too. Tears are mainly as well as smiles. Tears are no mark of weakness. "Jesus wept"—they reveal a heart of deep-seated sympathy. We are "to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another." God intended we should do both, hence he has fitted us out with tear glands and laughing muscles, and both are for use. There is a little sack in the human body which, for the want of more light, the physicians call the "appendix," from which we have the new disease "appendicitis." The doctor would slough it off as a useless thing, but more light on the subject will without doubt reveal its real purpose, and that purpose will be worthy of a God, for all his works are for a purpose. Therefore make use of your laughing muscles as well as your tear glands. The easy use of either shows their utility. It is natural, as we say, for some people to be cheerful and smile, while others seem to be under a pressure of about one thousand pounds to the square inch, for every cheerful or hopeful thing they say or do. However, my friend, be encouraged, cultivated fruit is far superior to the natural growth. Therefore give us cultivated cheerfulness, it will spend better. How some women can be cheerful with the kind of men they have to live with three hundred and sixty-five and a quarter days per year, is more than we can tell. They would turn you and me into vinegar in less than three weeks. And the second is like unto the first. How that dear old soul can be cheerful with that little spit-fire of a wife is a puzzle. But he does, God bless him! he smiles on day by day. Be encouraged, my brethren, while we speak without experience, be encouraged; some how be encouraged. "In heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage." "Grace can change frowns to smiles, because it supplants hate with love." That must be the secret of such patient endurance.

"Fold the banners,
Smelt the guns;
Love rules
Her gentle purpose runs."

But once more, we owe it to God to be cheerful: for when we are not we misrepresent God and Christ. If we are Christians and not cheerful we are a misnomer before the world. God has done his best for us, and we should do our best for him. And no man has done his best who does not strive to be cheerful and make others

cheerful also. God has smiled upon us that we should smile upon others. God has made a good world for us here and now. But, as uncle Eben says, "Folks keep a faden falt with this here world of our, but jes the same dar's mighty few of them but wishes there was more of it." There is many an one who is standing with his back to the sun and all the while declaring he has not seen him for days and weeks. Turn around and look, my friend, he is still there and shining too. These men walk with their faces turned from God, saying, "where is your God." Get right with Him, front toward Him and as truly as God floods the world with sunshine every morning, so will your soul and life be filled with the health of cheerfulness. Here is a good compass to which a thoughtful soul directs our attention. "Look out, not in; look forward, not backward; look up, not down." But no life is rounded and healthful that smiles all the time. Flush out the tear glands now and again, the health of body as well as soul demands it. God accepts it. In heaven there will be no tears, for "God shall wipe them all away." But here they are still needed, they are God's jewelled mercies to the sorrowful in heart. Here then the conclusion of the whole matter: Worship God, love your neighbor, do all with as much cheerfulness as you can command. Stand in the sunshine of God's smiling face that you may reflect some of His divine cheerfulness upon friend and foe.

"The year's at the spring
And day's at the moon;
Morning's at seven,
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing,
The snail's on the throne;
God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world!"

Wantsport, N. S.

North Carolina Letter.

Some old friends in the Provinces have been asking me to write again to the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. For several reasons I have not been able to comply with their request till this time. I suspect that the editor feels that he gave me more space than I was entitled to two years ago. During the past year I have had more than four hundred church members to care for. In the same territory there are more than three hundred unsaved people. This year I am to have more than five hundred members and I do not know how many unsaved men, women and children. Besides, our Cotton Factory will be opened before many months. In addition to this I have been "under fire" on account of my attitude towards the negroes and the liquor traffic. So hot was the fire at one time that it appeared I must leave Clayton. My warmest friends thought they would have to give me up, but we have triumphed.

There is much that would be instructive and interesting to write about, but I fear its character would be too secular for a sacred paper. The growing of sweet potatoes, the pulling of fodder from the corn stalks to take the place of hay, the planting, chopping, picking, ginning and marketing of cotton would be of interest to many but I refrain.

"The dispensary system" of dealing with the liquor traffic would be more appropriate. We have had a dispensary in this town about eighteen months. The best people in the country, as well as in the town, say that drunkenness has decreased not a little. The liquor men hate it and fight it. An effort was made at our last town election to do away with it. It was then I got the ill will of the "blind tiger" men and their sympathizers. It is claimed that the sentiment in favor of prohibition is growing, but many good men predict today that the saloons will be open here within five years. Eternal vigilance is the price of safety and success with any system. In my opinion the dispensary system is well worth trying when public opinion is not strong enough to enforce a prohibitory law. If any of your readers want more information I shall be glad to give it.

"The Constitutional Amendment" is another topic of interest, and after the recent effort to stir up race and religious strife in the Dominion you may be able to sympathize with us. I should not wonder if the opinion prevails in Canada, as well as in the Northern States, that the amendment grew out of the impious and unreasoning hatred towards the negro. I freely confess that there is such hatred, but I do not admit that it is characteristic of the best people in the South. "The inevitable amendment" was simply an effort to get rid of the ignorant, improvident and vicious vote which retards the progress of the State in all that is good. Many, very many white men would be glad if they could get rid of the ignorant, improvident and vicious white vote as well, but that would hopelessly divide the white people and continue the demoralization of our elections through bribery and bloodshed, intimidation, fraud and force. Our religious leaders now insist that the race issue be dropped at our elections, that better feeling be fostered and that the opportunity to evangelize and lift up the negro be embraced. This has been made very prominent in our denominational organ and by our mission boards. As long as the ignorant and improvident and vicious negro

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