

## A Psalm of Life.

*Written for the Review.*

At the beginning of this poem we notice the words "What the heart of the young man said to the Psalmist." We ask ourselves the questions "Who is the Psalmist and who is the young man?"

When the poem was first published innumerable disputes arose throughout the United States as to who was meant by the "Psalmist" and by the "Young Man." In order to settle the question some gentlemen went to Mr. Longfellow for an explanation. Upon being asked the question he replied, "You are the young man, I am the young man, every person in the United States is the young man."

Mr. Longfellow had probably been reading Ecclesiastes and founded his poem on the words of the Preacher, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." In "all the works" he certainly must include the creation of man.

Let us take man's spiritual nature for the young man, and Ecclesiastes for the Psalmist.

The young man's spiritual nature cries out in passionate entreaty to the Psalmist to beseech him not to tell him that life is vanity.

"For the soul is dead that slumbers,  
And things are not what they seem."

In Mr. Thomas Gray's "Elegy in a Country Church yard," we notice

"Chill penury repressed their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of the soul."

In this case it was Penury which made the souls slumber. But in Mr. Longfellow's poem it was the lack of interest in the responsibilities of life. When we allow our souls to slumber we do not see things as they really are. We may see a beautiful painting, but we take no interest in it. We can make life (both for others and ourselves) a beautiful, almost ideal scene.

Our lives do not end with death, and our destinations is not the grave or joy, or sorrow, but we must try to be more perfect each day.

Lives of men who have accomplished something in this world remind us that we can make our lives noble and help some poor friendless person to make his life noble.

Let us live to do good, to be good and to accomplish some purpose. Let us live to help God's cause on this earth. If God did not mean us to do good and live for a purpose, then why did Christ say, "By their works ye shall know them?"

## Brighten The Prayer Meeting.

We grieve that the young people and the unconverted do not oftener attend our prayer meetings. But is there not a cause? Are not our meetings often too melancholy?

In many meetings the troubles of the church or the trials of individuals are too much emphasized. Listeners would suppose that a great deal of unhappiness comes from religion. Our troubles should be laid at the feet of Jesus and not made the substance of long, drawn-out speeches that throw a somber shade over the prayer meeting.

Then too many of our prayers and testimonies are stereotyped. It is strange that we always seem especially interested in "the sick and the afflicted, the poor and the needy" in our prayers, particularly as we do so little for them. Is it necessary to always ask for the same thing in the same words? Do we not want some fresh blessings? And have we not some new gifts for which to be grateful? Then why not vary our testimonies a little? Surely our religion and our life have many phases for us to present.

Again, do we not too often hurt the meeting by preaching to one another? We can little help our erring brethren by lecturing them in prayer meeting. A kind, private admonition may reach the heart, but personal thrusts in the devotional meeting separate brethren.

Brighten the prayer meeting by joyful and loving testimonies, brief prayers for felt needs, short, varied and encouraging remarks, and lively singing. Praise ye the Lord.

## The Decline Of Uncertainty.

There is ample opportunity for the testing of character and the trying of principle along the ordinary routes of life's journey. Ways with which we are familiar, the crooks and turns of which are matters of experience, are not the less difficult on that account. We know the heights of the hills and the ruggedness of the road, and our knowledge does not lower the grade nor smooth the course. But when we are called to go forth, not knowing whither, when the contingencies of uncertainty perplex us, the strain on faith and courage is much greater.

It is easier "to bear those ills we have, than to fly to others that we know not of." Yet this discipline we may not escape. Our great Teacher knows that our faith needs education—when the mists envelop us, and the way out is not discernible. We may fear as we enter the cloud, yet we must go forward. Military expeditions are often sent forth under sealed orders. It is not deemed best at headquarters to divulge the object and the purpose of the undertaking. Secrecy is part of the policy which organizes and equips the force. For the soldier there is nothing but faith in authority, and obedience to it.

"Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die."

The analogy holds good in Christian experience. This hardness, the hardness of uncertainty, of apprehension and doubt, must be endured by those who would prove themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Consecration is not specific and elective. Obedience is not qualified. Heroic faith must be the condition of entrance upon untried ways. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

## Looks into Books.

THE COMPLETE PREACHER.—New York and Toronto, Funk & Wagnall.

I hate books so tightly bound that they will not lie open—the leaf everlastingly escapes my negligent fingers and I lose the place. Here is a ponderous volume of 1,000 pages, and it lies open beautifully anywhere and nowhere disturbs my equanimity. The type is good but the paper is poor. Funk & Wagnall never do give good paper. It is a pity that a firm which has done so much for the circulation of good, healthy, cheap literature, never deals in the fine toned pages of the English publishers. Thought printed on paper of inferior quality seems to be emasculated. This is a volume of sermons—or rather three volumes bound in one. Some claim that sermons are unprofitable reading—and they never read them. They are quite mistaken. Some of the finest things in the English or any other language are found in the homilies of the great Preachers. For intellectual and moral stimulus give me a sermon from Frederick W. Robertson, or R. W. Dale, or Joseph Parker, or Theodor Christlieb, or Alexander MacLaren. By the way I am surprised to find in this collection, taken from between fifty and sixty of the most eminent preachers of the century, MacLaren is not represented. Certain it is that many smaller men are here and few greater. But it is not necessary to be a small man in order to be smaller than MacLaren. There are few small men represented here, and it goes without saying that these are not their smallest sermons. Some of them are historic, epoch-making, such as Archdeacon Farrar's sermon on "Eternal Punishment," with replies by other eminent men. There is one admirable sermon by Dr. Dabney, on "The Popular Arguments against Endless Punishment," and another by Henry J. VanDyke, on "Why Christians Believe in the Doctrine of Future Everlasting Punishment."

I wonder if the forty-five-minute or hour sermon will ever come back to our pulpits again, of course they would need to be strong, well elaborated and strongly delivered, in order to displace the large and growing element—properly called entertainment—in our Church services. What a benediction it would be, to get back to simple worship purged of anthems, pulpits fumigated, cleansed of the very odour of claptrap themes, and have such lofty Gospel pronouncements as these enthroned! Imagine Liddon, or Dale, or Adolphe Monod, or Philip Brooks announcing such paltry catch-penny topics for pulpit performances as appear occasionally upon bulletin-boards on Toronto's streets! Unimaginable? The return of intellect—of depth and breadth of Scripture interpretation and application—with generous amplification—regardless of time limits, is not by any means impossible. We rather believe it to be a certainty, a necessity, when the age of deeper sympathies with truth, and larger unselfishness dawns. Men will seek to know the deep things of God and in patience wait for Him.

The value of a volume of this kind depends on the taste and discrimination of the compiler. There are not many sermons from any one man, and so it is a process of selection. There are a few names that we did not expect to find in such company. Perhaps trade and denominational exigencies had something to do with their admission. Notwithstanding the volume is well worth having and cannot be read without profit.

One of the most pitiful sights is to see an old man, professing faith in the promises of God, and in possession of plenty of the good things of this life, growing covetous and grasping as he nears the verge of the tomb;