

The Young Man and His Problem.

BY REV. JAMES L. GORDON.

LIFE IS NOT A JOKE.

Life is not a joke—not even a practical joke. We admire the man who has an element of saving humor in his make-up, but heaven save us from the joking man—the joking preacher, the joking lawyer and the joking insurance agent. Life is not a joke. The most dignified thing in the universe is an earnest man. Certainly a preacher can afford to be in earnest. Listen to the words of an American divine: "It is solemn business, this preaching and singing to those, grave-bound, judgment-day-going, who must 'forever live in rapture or in woe.'" I stood one day in an operating room when one of the distinguished surgeons of the land was to cut into the body of a young woman, cut right near the heart, in order to remove a particle of diseased tissue. I, too, was required to carefully wash my hands and face and don, like all the others in attendance, a white robe and cap and stand motionless as possible. There was no comment, no laughing, no, not even smiling; not a word was spoken, scarcely a whisper. All were profoundly serious and intent on saving the life of that woman."

THE DIVINE PLAN.

The divine plan?—What do you know about the divine plan?—nothing! But it is because I know so little about it that I have such a profound respect for it. I am sure that God must have a plan. I cannot preside over the affairs of a small church successfully without a plan. The master genius of the universe must have a plan, and I, though the most insignificant individual on the planet, must have a place in the divine plan. Look for the plan of Jehovah and try and take your place in it even though the road is rough. I quote: After the battle of Worth, 1773, Frederick III. said to Freytag, with deep feeling: "I abhor this butchery; I have never striven for a soldier's honors; I should have left military glory to another without any feeling of envy. Yet it has been my fate to pass from one war to another, and from one battlefield to another, and to wade through human blood before I mount the throne of my ancestors."

AN INSTINCT.

Love for beauty belongs to the eye—it will last until the last living eye has been plucked from the human physiognomy. Love for music belongs to the ear—it will last until the last earthly sound has broken upon the framework of the human ear. Love for love and desire for affection belongs to the heart and it will last until the last human heart has ceased to beat forever. The desire for immortality belongs to the soul and it will endure until the spirit of the last man stands naked and alone in the presence of the infinite. I ask for no argument for immortality—my soul tells me that I shall live forever. From an open book on my lap I quote the words: "Dr. Paulus, a professor at Heidelberg, was an atheist who denied immortality and the supernatural. When his final illness began he said he was about to die, and that that would be the end of him. For hours he lay in coma—no word, no look, no sign. It was supposed he would never rouse from that stupor. All at once his eyes opened and gazed at the ceiling as if he saw something those about him could not see; raising his head, he said distinctly, 'There is another life'; in a moment he was gone."

WRATH.

Wrath is a cruel thing. It blinds the soul. Wrath looks through blood-shot eyes and everything in the world seems as red as its own anger and as crimson as its own flaming indignation. Uncontrollable wrath is the nearest sane approach to insanity which is possible on the safe side of an unbalanced mentality. An English periodical remarks: "There are moments when anger surges in men and they see red. Then the slightest touch may liberate the madness that wrecks the labor of a lifetime. Europe has not forgotten the circumstances attending the resignation of M. Clemenceau last July, when in a fierce personal encounter with M. Delcasse he alienated his supporters and encountered defeat. Many a man saw in the incident an image of some event in his own life, when his career was permanently crippled. Rather than deny himself the gratification of his pride or anger, he has injured and disfigured life for himself and others."

YOUTH AND AGE.

Health means a perfect balance between mind and body. Too much muscle means heart failure; too much nerve means brain failure; a perfect balance between brain and body means well nigh perfect health. Dr. Osler has become famous for his suggestion concerning the usefulness of a man after he

has passed the dead line of forty; but his own life contradicts the theory. A writer in the Wide World remarks: "It has been his fate to give the most striking possible refutation of his own theory of old age, a theory, by the way, which merely sprang from an ebullition of post-prandial jocosity. At sixty-one he is a marvel of youthful vitality and elasticity. He brings with him into the musty lecture-room and pedantic common-rooms of Oxford a fresh breeze of virility and optimism and large humanity. He has shaken our old men, and sounded the charge to our young men, in the army of medicine, and, by the charm of his personality, he has wrought new links to bind together the old world and the new."

IRON CLAD.

The soul is an ironclad. No cyclone can reach it, no tornado can touch it, no catastrophe can harm it, no accident can hurt it, and no incident can effect it. Even though we go down at last in an earthly defeat, the soul shall survive in glorious victory. This paragraph comes to me with the power of an inspiration: "I am bigger than anything that can happen to me." I do not know by whom the poem "Invictus" was written, nor out of what blackness of suffering and struggle its sturdy challenge came, but I know that it is a true battle cry from the indomitable heart of courage of the ever undefeated man.

"Out of the night that covers me
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms up the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid."

"TOOK IN" BOARDERS.

The Bible of Human Biography is the biggest bible in the world. Read Biography! Read autobiography! So commands Thomas Carlyle. Read the biographies of the great and you will learn to respect the struggles of the poor and the patience of the humble. Did you know that the mother of Ralph Waldo Emerson took in boarders? By the following quotation I affirm it: "The parsonage where Emerson spent his early years had an orchard of some two or three acres. After his father's death, his mother moved to another street and kept boarders. The house was but a short distance from the common, and thither Waldo and his brother drove their mother's cow to pasture. At the age of eight, Waldo entered the public grammar school, and soon afterward the Latin school, where, at the age of eleven, he turned Virgil into readable English, loved the study of Greek, was fond of reading history and frequently wrote verses."

THE KEY-HOLE TEST.

A certain writer has well said that character is, "in the dark." What a man is "when nobody is looking" is the real man. What does the preacher do on his vacation? What does the student do when away from home? What does the merchant do when in New York? Can you stand "the Key-Hole test" which was applied to Oliver Cromwell? The Expositor has something to the point: "Oliver Cromwell was once lodging in Knaresborough. A young maiden of the house was ordered to take a pan of coals and air his bed. When she went out she stopped and peeped through the keyhole, having a natural curiosity to see what so great a man would do. She saw him rise from his seat, advance towards the bed, and fall on his knees, in which attitude he remained some time. After a while she went away, but again returned, finding him in the same position. How many of us could stand the keyhole test?"

END OF CHAPTER.

The sad thing about a fast young man is the fact that he gets to the end of himself so quick. All things have an end. The end of the sensualist is moving just as rapidly toward him as he is moving toward it. When the end comes, it comes suddenly. Everybody expects it except the man himself. Nobody is surprised except the man himself. Early in life he sold himself and when Nature says: "Deliver the goods!" He stands aghast. And yet the goods are delivered and the result is unchangeable—as unchangeable as character, fate and destiny. From a readable book I cull the following prose and poetry: "According to the legend, Faust engaged to surrender his soul to the Evil One if he would spare him for twenty-four years to live in all voluptuousness, give him whatever he might ask, slay all his enemies, and aid all his friends. Such was the

compact, signed with Faust's life-blood—a soul for twenty-four years of pleasure and unbridled license. The twenty-four years soon sped, and then he confessed he had made a miserable bargain and wasted his life. Alas, that so many still recklessly sign the devil's bond!

"Lo, one stands yonder waiting with the bill:
Master, thy soul!—mine by indenture clear."

"Rejoice, O young man! give thy heart its lust
Of cates and delicacies; yea, wreath the bowl,
And bid thy laughing lady kiss thee fond:
Take thy good year: the fiend denies not trust:
Only remember that thou hast sign'd the bond,
Nor in due season grudge to pay thy soul."

FACE IT.

Are you looking for ideal conditions; then you are looking for something which is hard to find. The only man who is blessed with ideal conditions, nine times out of ten, is the man who has created them for himself. The ideal must be carved out of the real and the real, to begin with, is never ideal. An English writer in dealing with this thought says: "If," says Thomas a Kempis, "you throw away one cross, you will beyond doubt find another, and perhaps a heavier." It is wonderful to me how many of the best things in my life have grown out of quiet acceptance of untoward and unpleasant circumstances.

WHEN TIME HANGS HEAVY.

When time hangs heavy we immediately prepare for its execution. We read a novel to "kill" time. We arrange an outing to kill time. We provide a program for the evening to "kill" time. We meditate upon the arrangement of some social affair to "kill" time. Novels are good, social gatherings furnish an opportunity for relaxation, and evening parties afford an opportunity to keep in touch with the world but a mental indifference to the value of time is an insult to Eternity.

There will come a time in the experience of your soul when the only treasure you will covet will be Time. The youth of twenty may fritter away his hours but the man of forty begins to realize that the highest measure of value is not expressed in gold or radium but in Time. In Cowley's essay, "The Danger of Procrastination," we find these words: "There is no fooling with life when it is once turned beyond forty."

BUILDING MATERIAL.

These are the days of steel construction and reinforced cement. Edifices can be constructed which even an earthquake cannot move, and foundations can be laid which only dynamite can disturb, but let us remember that society must be built on character and the only material out of which it can be constructed is genuine manhood. The Boston Congregationalist in an article on "Foundation Men" remarks: "The fathers had ways of doing things that to-day seem quaint and even queer, but that suggest some useful lessons for us more moderns. In the records of Westfield, Mass., it is narrated, under the date of 1579, that one day in June 'the church was organized and Mr. Taylor ordained. Seven men were selected to be formed into a church called foundation men.' It is also incidentally remarked that one Thomas Green was chosen, but declined. He was afterwards admitted to the church without narrating his experience, because he was so 'decayed by age that it was hard to gather it.' Every church must have its 'foundation men.'"

CHURCH MATTERS.

If you cannot find your way clear to join a church see to it that you help to support one. Your life is safer, your property more valuable and the influences thrown about your family, better and higher, because there is a church in your neighborhood. Church support will afford you splendid moral insurance at an exceedingly low rate. An exchange remarks, concerning Oliver Wendell Holmes: "Dr. Holmes was fond of church-going; he found, he said, that there was in the corner of his heart a plant called reverence, which wanted to be watered once a week. 'I am a regular church-goer. I should go for various reasons, if I did not love it; but I am happy enough to find great pleasure in the midst of devout multitudes, whether I can accept all their creeds or not.' His Sunday home for half a century was King's Chapel, at the corner of Tremont Street, in Boston. There he was married, there all his children were christened, and from that church his wife was buried, and he himself was carried through its door to his last resting-place."