

Pastor and People.

LIFE IN CHRIST.

I have a life with Christ to live,
But ere I live it must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?

I have a life in Christ to live,
I have a death in Christ to die,
And must I wait till science give
All doubts a full reply?

Nay, rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
Take but the lowest seat.

And hear Thine awful voice repeat
In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet,
Come unto Me, and rest,
Believe Me, and be blest.

P. J. Sharp.

FLOWERS.

BY THE REV. JAMES HASTIE, CORNWALL.

'Twas not in a church, nor school, nor private house that Christ spoke the words I am about to quote, but in the open air. He probably sat on the slope of a hill with the disciples gathered around. It was a beautiful May day, when spring was at its loveliest. Down from a clear sky the sunbeams were streaming. Shrubs and trees were vocal with song, while hither and thither birds were flitting, gathering food for their young.

Near by, clumps of flowers were growing, prominent among which towered the tall and delicate lily of variegated colour—blue and purple and white—two feet high, three feet, some three and a-half feet.

Pointing to these, as their rich fragrance was wafted by, Jesus said: "Consider the lilies," Matt. vi. 28. Then in beautiful language he made the application which you find in the verses following to the close of the chapter. Now, the use I am going to make of these words is suggestive rather than expository: To suggest how every heart ought to be a flower-garden unto God where Christ may come and pluck flowers of sweet thoughts and holy deeds as oft as He pleases.

For so doing; for thus regarding the human heart as the Lord's garden, I have the very best authority.

This is the metaphor employed in the Song of Solomon again and again, you remember, to describe the Church of God on earth, and also every believer:—

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse."

"Awake, O north wind, and come thee south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruit." iv. 12, 16.

Then, in response to this cordial invitation, Christ makes reply: "I am come into My garden," etc., v. 1. Now, regarding your young hearts as the Lord's garden, let me name a few flowers which every one should plant and carefully cultivate for Jesus.

1. THE WOODBINE OR HONEYSUCKLE.

The habit of this flower is to twine itself around the tree by which it is sustained, clinging to it in calm and storm, in cloud and sunshine, and covering the tree with its bright clusters of blossoms. If asked to guess what Christian grace corresponds to the woodbine, almost every child would give the correct answer. Your answer would be "Faith." Right.

This is the first grace Christ looks for when He comes into your garden. If He find faith there, though it be ever so small, one little root, He is delighted. Should He find no faith at all, His story will be short. Hence the Bible saith: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Remember, further, that of all the Christian graces faith is the most useful. Why? Because it is the great uniting grace, that grace which unites the soul to Christ, and makes the believer and Christ one as the branch and the trunk are one.

Because it is the great receiving grace, and is to the soul what the hand is to the body, that which accepts and retains the blessings which God offers.

Because it is the great mother grace from which all the others spring—joy and peace, hope and love, obedience and patience and all the rest.

I will give you two or three passages to read, in which you will see what a wonderful plant Faith is, and how necessary that it be found in every heart.

The first passage is Gen. xxxii. 24-31, where the story is told of how Jacob grasped the Angel (i.e., God) by faith, as the tendrils of the woodbine or the ivy do the tree, and held on till he got the blessing.

The second passage is Job i., where you read of one of the richest farmers of antiquity who in a few days lost all his property, all his children, and then his health, yet through it all he clung to God, as a frightened child clasps its mother's neck and said: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

The third passage is Hebrews xii., where sixteen different people are named, and many others who played the hero right grandly through faith.

2 The second flower is one not valued and cultivated as

much as it once was, and as it deserves to be, in view of its exquisite fragrance. I refer to the

PINK,

whose pretty blossom announces that winter is past and gone and summer is nigh.

Its Christian name is

HOPE.

In pictures Hope is usually seen with eyes uplifted heavenward, in token of help from above. What work is to the fisher's net, Hope is to man's life here—that which keeps him from sinking into despair.

It is the first aspiration to spring up in the child's soul, it is the last to die in old age. According to an old heathen fable, when Prometheus stole fire from heaven with which to animate mortal bodies, he gave Pandora a box which was closely shut. But her curiosity prompted her to open it, whereupon out flew a variety of plagues and evils which dispersed themselves over the world.

Confounded and frightened, Pandora shut the box again. When next opened it was found that all the rest of its contents had fled with the exception of Hope, which remained at the bottom, and proved the only consolation to mankind for the plagues which Jove had sent among them.

In the case of the true Christian, Hope is a grace which never, never can perish, because it is God-given and God-sustained. It is called in Scripture by a variety of names which set forth its true character and service. It is called a "good hope," because God is its author and sustainer. It is called a "living hope," because it springs from spiritual life, and renders its possessor energetic in every good work. It is called a "sure hope," because, like an anchor cast within the veil, it will eventually bring the soul safely into the haven of rest. Take good care, then, of this beautiful flower, and oft regale yourself with its fragrance when you get wearied and discouraged, for

Hope is the first great blessing here below,
The only balm to heal corroding woe;
It is the staff of age, the sick man's health;
The prisoner's freedom and the poor man's wealth;
The sailor's safety, tossing as one breath,
It still holds on, nor quits us e'en in death.

3. The third flower is the

ROSE,

known the world over as the "queen of flowers." Its corresponding name among the graces is Love, or Charity. Of all the flowers in heaven or in earth this is the one that God loves best. Its name is borrowed from God's own name, for "God is Love." Its excellencies are described in 1 Cor. xiii., to the number of sixteen. (1) "Charity suffereth long, (2) its kind, (3) envieth not, (4) vaunteth not itself, (5) is not puffed up, (6) doth not behave itself unseemly, (7) seeketh not her own, (8) is not easily provoked, (9) thinketh no evil, (10) rejoiceth not in iniquity, (11) rejoiceth in the truth, (12) beareth all things, (13) believeth all things, (14) hopeth all things, (15) endureth all things, (16) charity never faileth."

The Ten Commandments, Christ tells us, are all summed up in one word—Love. God's commandments we keep just in proportion as we love, for "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

The presence or absence of this flower decides whether your heart is one of the Lord's gardens or a waste common. "Lovest thou Me?" is the test question which is to decide who is to be admitted into heaven and who not.

4. Now we come to the beautiful flower which Christ spoke of, the

LILY,

the snow-white lily. Now, what grace corresponds to the white lily, think you? Who can guess? Don't you think it is Purity? Holiness? For hours might we speak about its beautiful colour, and its rich fragrance and graceful form, but I need not, for all are agreed on this point. But notice how easily it can be broken, and how easily soiled! Tall and tender and fragile its stalk, the slightest things will break it, and once broken how difficult to repair the injury.

Then how easily soiled are those large, snow-white petals! A drop of ink, a splash of mud, a touch from foul fingers would leave an unsightly stain. How true is all this of that heavenly flower of Purity which God wants to see blooming in every heart and life.

Every time you harbour an impure thought, or speak a bad word, or read a vile story, you soil the fairness of your lily and weaken its strength. What is the teaching of the Bible on this point? Is it not that we should be holy as God is holy?

The first chapter of Genesis tells us that when God created man He made him in His own image, one feature of which is Holiness. The last chapter of Revelation says that none shall be admitted into the New Jerusalem except the pure and holy. But, does some one say, 'Twould be an easy thing to live a pure and holy life if we had a holy and happy place to live in like Paradise of old? But how is it possible in a world so wicked as this? Ah! Consider the lily again, and learn from its life how to triumph over hindrances. Look at the pond-lily, with its roots imbedded in mud and slime, its stalk fed by foul air and stagnant water, its leaves and blossoms inhaling malarious atmosphere, yet in a marvellous manner it transforms that foul ground and foul water and foul air into loveliest blossom and richest perfume!

God's grace can enable you to transform all the temptations and annoyances, the sickness and suffering of this life

into spiritual nourishment and adornment, so that, like a lily, you shall grow up winsome and useful in spite of every drawback. Two things are indispensable to this: The blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, therefore pray God to apply it to our souls. While in answer to prayer the Holy Ghost will wash you whiter than snow. Then by-and-bye, when you come to die and your spirit passes hence, it shall be found that the whitest lily that ever grew in Palestine is not to be compared with the spotlessness and beauty of your soul and body.

Many other flowers deserve to be named, but I forbear. The violet, e.g., emblem of Humility. The pansy, often called heart's-ease, emblem of Content and Cheerfulness.

But the crowning flower of all I have yet to name—one which no money can buy, no tongue fully describe. It is sometimes called "the Lily of the Valley, sometimes the "Rose of Sharon." It was first seen in Bethlehem's manger. It was last seen on Mount Olivet. To see it now we must pass up into heaven. However, though it be unseen on earth, it is really present to every Christian in its fragrance and life.

Its name I need scarcely say is Jesus. In every heart, young and old, let Jesus be now planted. Once planted, this Lily will never die. But, living eternally, Jesus will impart His immortality to all the flowers besides in your garden.

YOUR PASTOR'S VACATION.

It is a fact that cannot be denied that every man needs a time of rest—a time when he can recuperate—a time when nature may have an opportunity to restore energy lost in constant effort and labour. Indeed, we may regard this as a law of nature, in which the earth participates and by reason of which she can go on producing year after year for the supply of the physical needs of man.

Winter is vacation time for our fields and gardens, we suppose we could by some process break in upon this order, how soon would Mother Earth rebel and refuse to answer our demand for food. So we may thank God for such a beneficent arrangement, which was for our sake.

This need of rest is being recognized more fully among men, and the exodus of our brain-workers has begun for the season—away to the seaside, the mountains, or perhaps the old home—for change and rest so much needed by the busy brain and overtaxed nerves of such as have been bearing the burdens of the financial or educational interests of our country.

Among the class of persons needing a change and rest are the pastors of our churches. No one who has not filled this position can conceive of the burden and care of a busy pastor. It may be truthfully said: "His work is never done"—and what a work! From two hundred to four hundred times a year he is expected to come before his people to teach and lead them, and if he is the man he ought to be, and the times and demands of his congregations require, he will aim to bring forth the best he can of things new and old from the word, and to serve it up to his hearers in the most earnest and forcible manner possible. But what a constant strain and pressure! It is indeed but little wonder that so many pastors are troubled with insomnia. Sure if the members of our Churches could feel the care and thought that is laid upon the ministry, they would appreciate their labours more highly and endeavour to lighten their burdens in every way possible.

Many of these pastors feel the need of rest and change, but the question of expense troubles them. "I can't afford it," is the answer we sometimes hear one pastor giving to another. So much self-denial is necessary in many a paragonage that there is really no way of indulging in such delightful and helpful a luxury as a vacation. Not only does the pastor suffer in such cases, but also his congregation. In proof of this, if your pastor is the man he ought to be, consecrated, full of zeal and love, send him away for a month, give him a benediction as he goes, in the way of sufficient funds to pay his way, and if he does not prove by his work afterwards that it has been a good investment for the congregation, then do as the negro congregation did for their pastor—send him his resignation.

But some of our pastors feel the need of rest for their mental and nervous system. And, recognizing the good that will come to their work, determine to go, and for this deprive themselves of other things necessary for successful work; and hence a gain in one direction means a loss in another, the only compensation being that life and usefulness are prolonged.

Will your pastor be able to find some way of taking a vacation this summer? Many of us can help our pastors find new life and energy during these few weeks of change and rest. How? Certainly not by stopping their salary while they are away, but by a cheque for at least part of their necessary expenses. Be assured of this, if you will make yourself a blessing to your pastor, he will be a greater blessing to you.—*Vacation, in Lutheran Observer.*

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