

BACKBONE.

Says the *Christian*:—"One thing which Christians, as well as others need at the present day is backbone. Not a backbone like a ramrod, that cannot yield or bend, but a well-articulated spinal column, which is strong enough to hold a man upright, and keep him from being crushed beneath the burdens that press upon him. These are days of easy-going piety; and men are too often ruled by compromise rather than by conscience.

"Says Mr. Spurgeon:—"Oak has given place to willow. Everybody has grown limp. Out of the generality of limppness has come an admiration for it. A man cannot speak a plain word without being accused of bitterness, and if he denounces error, he is narrow minded; for all must join the universal-admiration society, or be placed under ban and behowled down."

"Now, in such a condition of things as this, there is special call, not for stubbornness and crustiness, but for gentle, patient, unyielding conscientiousness and firmness, which anchors the soul to the everlasting Rock, and causes the heart to rest on Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and who will never leave nor forsake us."

"ALWAYS AVOIDING THE WORK OF THE LORD."

The deplorable readiness with which many Christians shrink personal work with souls reminds me of a passing remark I heard from a somewhat eccentric preacher. In giving a running commentary on a portion of 1 Cor. xv., when he came to the last verse he read: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always *avoiding* the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord;" and then added, "O, it is not 'always avoiding,' but 'always *abounding in*' the work of the Lord; but really it is read 'avoiding' by so many Christians, if we may judge by their lives, that I almost insensibly fell into the mistake of reading it so." And indeed, when I see in my own experience how fertile many Christians are in expedients for "avoiding" the work of the Lord, I am amazed. They will get over it, or under it, or around it, or walk by it, and not see it, or they will otherwise avoid it, as if the chief end of Christianity was to serve Christianity as little as possible.—*G. F. Pentecost, D. D.*

A GOOD RESOLVE.

Hugh Miller has told how, by one act of youthful decision, he saved himself from one of the subtle temptations so peculiar to a life of toil. When employed as a mason, it was usual for his fellow-workmen to have an occasional treat of drink, and one day two glasses of whiskey fell to his share, which he swallowed. When he reached home he found on opening his favourite book, Bacon's *Essays*, that the letters danced before his eyes and that he could no longer master the sense. "The condition," he says, "into which I had brought myself was, I felt, one of degradation. I had sunk by my own act, for the time, to a lower level of intelligence than that on which it was my privilege to be placed, and though the state could have been so very favourable one for forming a resolution, I, in that hour, determined I would never again sacrifice my capacity of intelligent enjoyment to a drinking usage; and, with God's help, I was enabled to hold by this determination."

A HINDU HUSBAND'S CREED.

"The Hindu idea of marriage is curious. A man both day and night must keep his wife so much in subjection that she by no means be mistress of her own actions. If the wife have her own free will notwithstanding she is of superior caste, she will go amiss. A woman shall never go out of her house without the consent of her husband, and shall pay proper respect to her husband's father, the spiritual guide and her guests, and shall not eat until she has first served them with victuals (if it is medicine she may take it before they eat); a woman shall not stand at the door, and must never look out of the window. If a woman, following her own inclinations, goes whithersoever she chooses and does not regard the words of her master, such a woman shall be turned away. If a man goes on a journey, his wife shall not divert herself by play, nor see any public show, nor laugh, nor dress herself with jewels or fine clothes, nor see dancing, nor hear music, nor sit at the window, nor ride, nor behold anything rare or choice, but shall fasten well the house door and remain private; and shall not eat any dainty victuals, and shall not exercise herself in any agreeable employment during the absence of her husband."