

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

## WHOLESOME PIETY.

Naturalness in religion is what makes its appearance perfect and its influence healthy. The office of piety is simply to restore the soul. Melancholy and moroseness are symptoms of disease. And our whole nature is corrupt and sick. Christ is a physician, and the gospel is His specific cure for all our morbid humours. Hence to assert that a Christian is more useful by being happy-hearted, is nothing more than to say any man is more efficient in all that makes him a man in proportion as he is in perfect health. Spiritual health brings the whole man into exercise.

Let us get at this with all simplicity. Call before your recollection now for a moment one of those occasions which occur in everybody's experience. You are at a little family party, let us say. But some incubus or dullness lies over the guests. Everything goes decorously but solemnly on. There is no use in trying to disguise the fact; it is stiff and uncomfortable. You are all mortified and fatigued with the vain attempt to be interested and become interesting. Just now the door opens, and in comes a new arrival—one of those individuals we sometimes meet in a world like ours, which really has too few of them.

His face is radiant with good cheer, and every other face is radiant in an instant with welcome. Right hand goes to this acquaintance, heartily goes the left hand over to that, so the whole room is alive with greeting and answer. A sally of pleasantry flies over across to one friend, and a gentle wish to another. He finds his way with perfect good-breeding to the lady of the house, and bends gracefully, acknowledging her as its head. But his voice hushes instinctively, and his manner softens, as he tranquilly gives a greeting to a pale invalid in the corner. Down he sits in the very midst of the throng, and happy is the one who sits next to him. There he is the centre of unconscious attraction. You seem to think that up to this moment you had been waiting for him.

Yet observe; he says nothing others might not say, does nothing others might not do. But there is an indescribable charm—an irresistible force in his presence. His very look kindles the company he has entertained. Watch him for a half hour. Now he is at a quaint story, with funny episodes, that are met all around with pleasant laughter. Now he is describing some pathetic adventure which fills your eyes with tears. Again he is listening to a comrade whose wit he has started, or some abashed maiden whose diffidence he has mysteriously wiled away.

"Oh, yes," says some croaker, not a little jealous; "a lady's man; a society assistant on call; a lion with a popular mane or a new stripe in his colour; a trifier, worldly and volatile." Well, ere long you notice he is sitting by the side of one of the awkward boys, inquiring with a whole heart full of sympathy after his brother sick at home. That boy believes in him with all his soul, for he remembers how many times he has watched by the bedside in the midnight, with hand firm as th. doctor's, and footfall light as a mother's. And one evening, perhaps, he overheard this man—this one now telling the anecdote—wrestling for his brother in prayer for comfort and recovery.

Go on; croak as you will; call him shallow, because he sings a song full of wise nonsense. But mind you, for you miss him just now, he slipped unnoticed up stairs to see the old folks. There he sits now talking sober words of reverent regard to the old patriarch who keeps out of company hereafter, waiting at the quiet fireside with his Bible.

So this happy-hearted, earnest hearted man glides along, from gayety and gladness into that which is more thoughtful, like a sleigh over snow. And on the whole, his life is as full of meaning as the best life amongst us. He is popular, and why? Because he possesses a contented, manly health. He is natural, and so his companionship is wholesome and inspiring. He is what you would call genuine, oh, word of unmistakeable meaning! He is a true man, because he is a new man in Christ Jesus. He sees the bright side wherever he can; he sees the dark side, too, and tries all he can to leave it at least a little brighter.

The main question is, Where did he get all this? You might as well ask the dairy-maid, out on the free hills among the cows, where she got the ruddy bloom on her cheeks; she never had anything else. Healthiness is not the thing to be got; it is the sallow coun-

tenance, the thin visage, the weak step, which has to be got. So here, this glow of cheerful piety is natural and belongs there. It is the habit of carping and the disposition of croaking which has to be acquired. Cheerfulness, like health, comes of itself. It is sickness and disease that are what lonesome men and companionable devils toil together to accomplish on earth.

A Christian man is a genial, happy, manly man, a Christian woman is a contented, cheerful, womanly woman, unless some warping, injurious influence has destroyed the first and fitting balance of nature restored by divine grace. A warm heart, a considerate thoughtfulness, a free conscience, a noble purpose, an informed mind, a cultivated taste, an appreciative intelligence, and a habitable judgment of others these are elements of a truly religious character, they belong immediately to one who has been regenerated by the wonderful power of celestial love. The one ineffable, unparalleled benediction of the gospel is, to every soul which has been created anew by it, just this, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

C. S. Robinson, D.D., in *S. S. World*

## IN THE FOGS.

"Is it *always* foggy here?" inquired a lady passenger of a Cunard steamer's captain, when they were groping their way across the Banks of Newfoundland. "How should I know?" replied the captain gruffly—"I do not *live* here." But there are some of Christ's professed followers who do manage to live in the chilling regions of spiritual fog for a great part of their unhappy lives. They spend much of their time under a cloud, and but few streaks of sunshine brighten their leaden sky. Worse still, they seem most perversely to anchor themselves in those latitudes where the fogs prevail.

These sun-hiding mists generally are bred from their own hearts; they are the direct result of unbelief. The cloudy Christians are the doubting Christians. They manage to give house-room to every doubt that comes along. Instead of shutting the door in the face of these tormentors, as John Newton did when he sung "Begone unbelief! my Saviour is near"—they invite them in and harbour them. And never will these desponding disciples get rid of their doubts until they deal with them as the tippler must deal with the bottle, if he desires to reform. You must break up your sinful habit, cost what it may. When a doubt begins to creep over you, resist it! Pray to be delivered from it. Grasp the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, and parry off the enemy by the dexterous use of God's promises. Study these, and keep them always within your reach. You did not issue those promises, but God did; you are not responsible for them, but God is. The setting of your own ignorance above His knowledge, and of your own weakness above His might, and of your own fears above His everlasting faithfulness, is an insult and a crime. Say to yourself emphatically—"This devil of doubt shall not torment me any longer. If I go on in this way I shall become an infidel and an outcast. I will not trifle with my Almighty Saviour again. I will cling to Him if I perish. Lord! I believe; help Thou my wicked unbelief!"

A positive act, and course of action on your part, will break up and scatter the fogs, just as heat vanquishes cold, and sunlight dispels darkness. During his earlier life Dr. Merle D'Aubigné, the Swiss historian of the Reformation, was grievously vexed with depressing doubts. He went to his old teacher for help. The shrewd old man refused to answer the young man's perplexities, saying, "Were I to get you rid of these doubts, others would come. There is a shorter way of destroying them. Let Christ be *really* to you the Son of God, the Saviour. Do His will. His light will dispel the clouds, and His Spirit will lead you into all truth." The old man was right, and the young D'Aubigné was wise enough to adopt his counsel. He hoisted anchor, and moved out of the region of fogs, and quietly anchored himself under the sunshine of Christ's countenance.

Active devotion to Christ's service is another cure for spiritual despondency. The faith faculty gets numb by long inaction, just as a limb becomes numb and useless if it is not exercised. The love-power grows cold if it is not kept fired up. When faith and love both run low, the soul easily falls into an ague fit. What you need is to get out of yourself into a sympathy with, and downright efforts for, the good of

others. When a desponding Christian came to old Dr. Alexander for relief, the Doctor urged him to pray. "I *do* pray continually." "What do you pray for?" The young student said, "I pray that the Lord would lift upon me the light of His countenance." Then, replied the sagacious veteran, "go now and pray that He will use you for the conversion of souls." This was on the principle that a man who is in danger of freezing, will keep himself warm by pulling others out of the snow. Zealous workers for Christ seldom drift into the region of fogs. They are too busy to nurse doubts, and the exercise of their graces keeps them in a glow.

The worst of all despondency is that which arises from wilful sin and wandering from Christ. A backslider's sins "like a thick cloud" separate him from Christ, a chilling eclipse comes on, and the countenance of Jesus is hidden from him. No church member who neglects prayer, who pursues crooked practices in business, who indulges sensual appetites, and who violates his vows, can expect to be happy. For him, while anchored on those "fishing-banks" of Satan, there can be no assurance of hope and no joy in the Lord. Secret sin is at the bottom of nine-tenths of the misery which Christ's professing people suffer. When sin is put away by repentance, the cloud moves off, and the blessed beams of the pardoning Saviour burst upon the soul. But while a Christian is steering away from the straight track of obedience and godly living, he is very sure to find himself in the fogs. —Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, in *N. Y. Evangelist*.

## THE GREAT HELPER.

Every person is conscious of lacking something in his daily effort to live well. It may be an uneasiness as to the future in view of the past. It may be a spirit of doubt that disturbs every effort toward faith. It may be practical ignorance of the real duties of daily life. It may be the want of some example such as we have never seen in our fellow-men to pattern life after, or the lack of a positive assurance that religion is real, that God is real, that eternity is real.

Now if one or all of these longings of humanity can be met and satisfied by any being, that one is the Great Helper. In Christ the world has one that answers to this human call. His grace is all-sufficient to lift any man up out of the dreadful past and the anxious present to full assurance of the better future. The fact that such a being as Christ ever lived on earth, a mystery to those who lived with Him, yet a blessing to them for good,—something of a mystery to all who have read His life and death in the gospel since He passed away from earth, yet a greater power in the world to-day than ever,—this fact ought to satisfy any sane man that religion is a reality, for Christ lived religion; that God is real, for Christ was so much above the highest conception of a man, He reflected the best idea that man has of what God is; that eternity is also real, for Christ talked as familiarly of eternity as He did of time. The only explanation that can be given of such a being is the solution of these great disturbing questions.

His practical life likewise enlightens our ignorance of the duties of living. His life, so pure, so true, so perfect, is the outline for our life, and the infallible guide in life. What He said and did under the varying circumstances of His earthly being, as far as they touch our lives, we may say and do. The way Christ acted among men we may safely act. And as He came from God and was of God, we may know that Christ's life is the life God wants man to live.

Christ, then, is the Great Helper, and not to any one class or race of men alone, nor to any one condition of life. He is the universal friend, brother, Saviour. Why will any one try to live without seeking help from Christ?

"I am the way, the truth, the life"—*Golden Rule*.

THERE are twenty Christian chapels in Antananarivo, a city of 100,000 population in Central Madagascar. The observance of the Sabbath day is rigorously kept there. No trade of any kind is permitted and the shops are all closed.

As no appeal has been taken by the Rev. Mr. Mackonochie to the House of Lords, the Court of Arches is to be asked to enforce the suspension of Mr. Mackonochie, according to the original sentence, for persistence in illegal ritualistic practices.