

*dolce far niente.* Much as most workers, in the rush and hurry of our time, need a little quiet for tranquil thought, too much tranquillity and too much contemplation had to barren self-indulgence, injurious both to the Christian and the social life. The field may be fallow too long! By a too exclusive pre-occupation with Nature and comparative forgetfulness of the facts and needs of human life, it is easy for the mind to glide insensibly into a mood in which the story of the Cross seems a contradiction and an anomaly. Whittier beautifully brings out this truth in his poem, "The Meeting":

"But Nature is not solitude.  
The crowds as with her thronging wood,  
Her many hands reach out to us,  
Her many tongues are garrulous,  
She will not leave our senses still,  
But drags them captive at her will,  
And, making earth too great for heaven,  
She hides the Giver in the given."

This is probably one reason why such men as Arnold and Thoreau have taken an attitude antagonistic to evangelical Christianity. We need, for our soul's health, to be brought face to face with the needs and sufferings which the story of the Cross alone can meet, especially when, through much absorption in the outward life of Nature, such needs in our own hearts are for the time lulled to sleep. And we need it not less for our healthy life as human beings, than for our healthy religious life. Though Wordsworth tells us that "the impulse of a vernal wood" will "teach us more of man" than all the sages, yet all are not equally sensitive to its lessons, and, for most people, a little real work among their fellow men, a few honest attempts to help and sympathize, will be much more salutary. We need our "needy brethren" as much as they need us. There is a higher happiness, one more worthy of moral beings, in helping the helpless, ministering to those who need our ministrations, "rescuing the perishing, than even in enjoying the most exquisite scenery with which Nature can surround us, or in yielding to the most fascinating influences of her thousand spells. Each in its place is good, but life is better than dreaming; and so we may find compensation even in the bitter autumn winds that deprive us of the cherished summer delights of intimate communion with Nature, if they only drive us back to take up the burdens of our fellow men and make summer in the soul for ourselves and others, when grim winter reigns in field and wood. There are many ways in which we realize the infinite truth of the words of Christ: "He that loseth his life shall find it." For

"Love's a flower that will not die  
For lack of leafy screen;"

And

"There are, in this loud stemming tide  
Of human care and crime  
With whom the melodies abide  
Of th' everlasting chime—  
Who carry music in their heart  
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,  
Plying their daily task with busier feet  
Because their secret hearts a holy strain repeats."

God's best and highest revelation of Himself to man is not material but spiritual, and much of the teaching of Nature and the discipline of life is intended to teach us this. And it is remarkable and suggestive that, in the good Providence of God, who overrules all human affairs, the season of Nature's deepest gloom is that in which the Christian Church celebrates the Advent and Incarnation of God's highest revelation of Himself in Christ—the one hope of Humanity.

#### "GIVE THANKS TO GOD."

Give thanks to God who reigns on high,  
Yet makes our wants His care;  
He heeds the hungry raven's cry,  
He hears his people's prayer.

How rich the promises divine  
Which faith may boldly plead;  
With light and comfort how they shine,  
How well they meet each need!

A very instructive lecture was delivered last week by the Rev. J. H. MacVicar, B.A., in the lecture hall of Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Montreal, the subject being the somewhat paradoxical one of "Happy Miserable China." Mr. MacVicar showed in a most entertaining manner how China was happy in its misery, and miserable in its happiness. The lecture was illustrated by excellent photographic views taken direct from real life and scenes in China, and thrown on the screen by limelight from a fine lantern. A large audience was present, and listened with wrapt attention to the lecturer's graphic delineations of Chinese life and character in the Flowery Kingdom.

Bishop Sessums, of Louisiana, says. "An education which leaves out the divine is not complete; it is an injustice to our human nature. It is a very poor religion, on the other hand, which undertakes to leave out education."

WHITTIER: THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN

#### AMONG CHINESE PIRATES.

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WHEN a youth, and a voracious devourer of books, no stories pleased me better than the thrilling adventures of some Pirate. The evil aspects of his often ill-fated enterprise were neither denied nor lost sight of; but, without any willingness on my part to exercise too rigid a scrutiny, he and his companions were accorded the status of Heroes. The dash and daring of these desperadoes, the rush with which they carried everything before them, and the ingenuity with which they eluded their pursuers and retained possession of the spoils, beclouded my judgment sufficiently to make me ready to condone what I should have condemned. But since those early days many a delusion has been rudely dispelled, and my sympathy with Pirates in particular has been very effectively dissipated. For in the interval, and more than once, I have had some opportunity of examining their work at uncomfortably close quarters; and the glamour of romance quickly disappeared amid the perturbations of a grim repulsive reality.

Such memories happen not to be unseasonable, at a time when the hearts of many are being moved with a devout thankfulness. Each life has its own retrospect, and along the way of the years thought takes us all back to many a place where we have set up a stone of remembrance. There are several incidents in my own career, which it is impossible to recall without feelings of gratefulness. One or two of these experiences may briefly be recounted.

When visiting Shanghai some years ago, my wife and I made several attempts to reach Formosa, not only because of the wondrous beauty of the island, with its great camphor forests and its magnificent tree ferns, but especially because it was the home of Rev. Dr. McKay, and the scene of one of the most flourishing missions of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Disappointment succeeded disappointment however. No suitable craft was announced to sail for some days; we would have had to make our way first to Foochow, where another wait confronted us; we had the prospect of encountering a Monsoon at that season of the year; we discovered that the method of effecting a landing at Formosa was decidedly primitive, and was likely to entail some inconvenience; and it also transpired that it was doubtful whether we could secure early conveyance thence to Hong Kong, where we had to keep an important engagement. Hence, with some reluctance, we abandoned temporarily our purpose, resolving to visit Formosa later on, when our visit to Hong Kong should have been completed. On our way South, however, we learned with pleasure that a very comfortable British steamer would sail from Hong Kong for Amoy shortly after our arrival at the former port; and at once we made up our minds to secure a passage by her. In due time we reached Hong Kong; but, to our renewed disappointment, we found that the steamer in question was to sail two hours later! We had not expected to start at such short notice, indeed, already tired out by a voyage of nearly three days, and a local engagement having to be kept, the thing was practically out of the question. So, with very keen regret, we were once more compelled to abandon our long cherished project.

But mark what immediately followed. The day of which I am speaking was Tuesday, December 9th, 1890. The P. and O. steamer *Mirzapore*, upon which we had arrived from Shanghai, dropped anchor off the quay about 8 a.m. For two hours we had been gliding onward, amid all the glories of an Eastern sunrise, through those numerous beautiful islands which mark the approach to Hong Kong's superb harbor. About 8 a.m. the *Namoa*, the steamer for Amoy, sailed. At 1 o'clock, while lunch was being served in the saloon, two hundred of the steerage passengers showed themselves armed upon the deck, and at once seized the ship. The wheelman of course, and one or two others, had to be reckoned with by the Pirates, and the commotion which ensued caused the captain to dash up the companion-way on the run. He was instantly shot, and died soon afterwards. Within a few moments, three others were killed and four were wounded. One of the saloon passengers who offered resistance was tossed overboard and drowned. Meantime, while panic and slaughter reigned, the steamer continued serenely on her course. If passing vessels had caught a closer view, they would have observed that the two hundred innocent looking coolies had confidently thrown off their disguises; for they had now turned their blouses inside-out, and lo they wore boldly the livery of their profession! As regards the passengers, native and foreign, dexterous fingers relieved them rapidly of whatever valuables they were

found to possess; and then the original owners of these spoils were securely locked up in the state rooms and placed under guard. By and by, at a place previously appointed, six Junks were overtaken as they lazily moved along. But those quiet decks, in a few moments, became fairly alive with busy workers; nearly the whole of the cargo of the Amoy vessel, representing a value of about \$25,000, was rapidly transferred to them; the engines of the steamer were disabled, and the fires extinguished, the boats, swinging in the davits, were rendered useless; the six Junks hurried away in as many different directions; and the exciting affair was ended!

And yet, happily, it was not ended. As soon as intelligence of these proceedings reached Hong Kong the whole city was stirred. The incident was not indeed unique, for this was the fifth occurrence of the kind that had transpired within the preceding thirty years; but it was sufficiently serious to warrant prompt action. Accordingly the British authorities brought the matter at once to the attention of the Chinese Government, and even offered to send a couple of men-of-war in instant pursuit of the robbers. But the Chinese Viceroy haughtily affirmed that his resources were quite equal to the occasion, and declined all assistance, with the result that the rascals were almost beyond reach before the cumbrous local machinery began actually to move. Several of the Pirates were subsequently secured and beheaded. At least it was officially announced that justice had been satisfied, though it is quite possible that among those who made expiation were some who suffered unjustly. Still, in this way, the popular unrest was quieted; and the leisurely sipping of tea and smoking of opium were resumed with undisguised gladness.

Another memory, recalling the flutter and thrill of a very disagreeable experience, comes back to me now as I write. It was two days subsequent to the *Namoa* incident, and while the fever of that horrid excitement still burned in everybody's blood. My wife and I were passengers on the steamer *Honan*, proceeding up the Pearl River to Canton. The sail, under other circumstances, would have been simply charming. Islands, sequestered groves, pleasure resorts, curious pyramidal Pagodas;—the eye might have enjoyed a continual feast. Besides, the captain was a most genial American, and he did everything in his power to make his temporary guests feel at home. Still there was but one thought uppermost in every mind; we had seen some ugly looks and scowls on Chinese faces as we had walked that day in the streets of Hong Kong, and there was everywhere a feeling of risk and unrest. This apprehension was certainly not lessened when we observed that, as soon as it became dark, the Chinese steerage passengers on board were being watched from above by an armed guard! The captain, moreover, kindly though he was, never allowed his revolver to lie beyond reach of his hand; and, altogether, the atmosphere tended to give one the creeps. Imagine then our consternation when, the darkness having now settled down about us, our steamer was peremptorily hailed from a boat that was being swiftly rowed to ward us. We all looked instinctively toward our captain, who had sprung to his feet. "A midnight attack this time; and a capture—sure!" some one exclaimed; and we all tried to feel reconciled to the inevitable. The captain yelled some rapid orders, which of course we did not understand; the steamer was actually stopped, and six rough looking men came up over the ship's side! When our captain silently led them below, and the seven forms disappeared from our view, it is not too much to say that our nerves were wound to the point of supreme tension. At such a moment we could confidently have discovered the forbidding visage of a Pirate in almost any one. Our feelings, however, proved in the present instance, to have been quite needlessly alarmed. The savage raid made upon our steamer by six stalwart freebooters turned out to be merely the quite common-place visit of a party of Custom House officials on the search for smugglers!

On other rivers of China, further to the eastward, as we espied the little brass cannon, which are ever found on the decks of the innumerable freight Junks, we were continually reminded that the merchants of that empire may well offer a prayer for "those who go down to the sea in ships." There is one peril ever impending, which is as destructive of cargoes as storms or shoals. It is upon such craft, in no sense capable of coping with a well armed and courageous foe, that the Pirate delights to swoop. But it has also happened occasionally, it happened in 1890, during our eastern sojourn of which I am now writing, that the person of a missionary will be seized, and the Pirate will hold his victim as a hostage, male or female, as the case may be, until a sufficient ransom is forthcoming.

Doubtless my wife and I were sometimes in risk from this quarter, when we in no wise suspected that there was any danger. At other times we were consci-