

HEAVEN.

“Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” These are not very popular sayings with the multitude—the very great multitude—who believe in all sorts of communism. The communist is one who seeks—if that word “seeks” be not taken to represent too much of industry and steady purpose—a heaven of wealth so cheap that all can enter in. It must be easy of approach to the loafer, the tramp and the pleasure seeker; and the communist longs for such a state of easy prosperity, forgetting that if it could be realized it would be worth just what it costs—that is, nothing at all. Yet with this axiomatic truth staring them in the face—if truth can stare at all it would do so at such fellows—the heedless multitude clamors for a wealth so cheap that the indolent and shiftless can afford it, and idolizes the men who preach such an easy gospel. A good many, who could tell these deluded dreamers better than that; who could show them—if they would see—that the thing is impossible; that wealth is the product of toil, still refuse to see that the same law holds in the intellectual realm. Many are looking here and there for a cheap and easy education—for a college that will graduate them in a few short terms, and give them a culture so cheap that it may be secured by the dunce, the dude, and the devotee of pleasure. There are a good many who could tell these dreamers better than that, who are, nevertheless and nevertheviser, looking for a heaven—the eternal spiritual home—so cheap and easy that all may enter without trouble. They demand and applaud the preachers whose gospel embraces the sordid self-seeker as well as the missionary and the martyr. Yet it is plain that, either there is no such heaven as these evangelists promise, or—if there is—the missionary and the martyr pay a great deal more for it than it is worth. If there be a broad, smooth down grade way into the heaven of wealth, or learning, or fame, or into the heaven of heavens itself, there can be no wisdom in striving to enter the narrow, rugged and uphill way by which so many have gone. But all experience unites with revelation in declaring that the way to any excellence, any real reward—any heaven—is straight and narrow, and the many are continually missing it. This is not only a truth of revelation but a fact of experience, and of all unprofitable controversies the quarrel with facts is the most unprofitable.

Since the way to heaven, then is a narrow, up-hill way, the matter of motives becomes all-important. It used to be thought practicable to flog a boy into the heaven of culture, and to scold him into habits of industry. But while punishment may guard against dereliction, it can never prompt to duty. Penalty may prevent crime, but never can be a motive to righteousness. Herein is the law weak. The old brimstone preaching

frightened multitudes away from the brink of hell, but did not invite or lead them to heaven, and being left leaderless they went forth into the wilderness without a Moses—if we may in the license of figure mix type and antitype in this fashion. All steady progress must be maintained by the attraction of the end, not the initial impulse of the start; and if we ever go on to perfection the motive of the going will not be found in repentance from dead works, nor in any of the fundamentals of doctrine or duty by which we are made free from sin, but in the attractiveness of our Leader and the desirableness of the home which he has prepared for us and himself in the many-mansioned dwelling. The great and ultimate motive in any complete career resides not at the *terminus a quo* but at the *terminus ad quem*; and the Christian must be kept in the way of life more by the attractiveness of heaven than the hideousness of hell. There must even come a time when the latter ceases as a conscious motive—when perfect love casteth out fear. Ask yourself, then, not how much you hate the devil, but how much you love Christ; not how much you dread hell—for fear has torment—but how much you desire heaven.

Heaven is but a weak motive to many, because their idea of it is so wholly negative. To them it is only a place of refuge from toil, or pain, or anxiety, or loneliness, and of course they only turn to it when they are tired, or sick, or worried, or deserted. But it does not happen to the average man or woman to be in these conditions long at a time, and so the striving to enter in is very spasmodic with a good many. They seem to make a little progress in times of affliction, out of sheer desperation, but give up as soon as relief has been found. Yet this is an element of the desirableness of heaven that should be uppermost occasionally in our lives. The weary wayfarer as he approaches his home is very likely to long for his rest, and as he becomes more and more weary this will seem more and more its chief attraction; but if this were all of it he might as well put up at the inn—and better, for there he would not be disturbed by domestic cares. If this were all of it, he would want to be gone as soon as he should be rested and filled. From the notion some seem to entertain of heaven I suppose that as soon as they rest up a little they will desire to get out and ramble again. The downiest bed is but a prison to him who has had his rest. He is unfit for the duties, and much more for the blisses, of domestic life, who looks upon home simply as a refuge from hunger, and weariness, and outside troubles; and he is unfit for the duties—for these must be—and more unfit for the blisses of heaven, who regards it simply as a refuge from worldly ills—only as a great asylum for the vanquished and the discouraged. Christ says, “Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,” but that is not all he has to give, and when one has had enough of that it is a very undesirable commodity. If heaven is to be a motive to lofty aspirations, and noble constant endeavor, it must, like home, be some-

thing more than a lodging-house—a place of eating and sleeping. There must be wrought into our idea of heaven something more positive and enduring than this, and something more lasting too, than the comparison between its glory and earth's gloom. I doubt not that

When out of the bliss of that God-lighted clime
We look back on these threatening cloud-banks of
time,

We shall find that these shadings of misery here
Were for back-grounds for pictures of happiness
there.

Heaven's rest will be better for toiled-filled years;
Our eyes shall be brighter for bathings of tears;
The clear River of Life shall be sweeter for those
Who have drunken the deepest where Marah out-
flows,

And the Christ shall be dearer because of the fall,
And the Father be nearer—the All-and-In-All.

But heaven's chief delight will not be in the contemplation of pictures, however glorious and historic; nor will its most permanent delight be found in the sense of a comparison of experiences which must vanish as the after experiences lengthen. There is vastly more in heaven than we find in our philosophies, or even in our faiths oftentimes, but we will reserve this side of the question for future consideration.—*B. J. Radford.*

EVERY DAY WORKERS.

The church is yet to learn that its chief work is to be done by consecrated men of ordinary calibre. Great speeches never marshalled a host. An eminent Scotch divine, getting into the pulpit after a week's elaboration of a learned discourse, forgot it entirely and was compelled to give a plain talk, which, under God, swept half his audience into the kingdom.

There is an absurd call in the church to-day for what are called “big guns,” and but little appreciation of well loaded rifles. The “Swamp Angel” in the last was was a failure. It proposed to do great things, but after awhile they found it was cracked and were afraid to use it lest it blow up. So, while men of but small capacity are doing their work well, and make no fuss about it, we have a few “big guns” half cracked with conceit about themselves, and they blow up just when they are wanted for important service.

The nuisance of the church to-day is ecclesiastical “Swamp Angels.” Dr. Chalmers' astronomical sermons “make us see stars,” but we suppose there were at the time of their delivery uncelebrated ministers of Christ in Scotland who were bringing more souls to the Saviour. Patrick Henry's speech did good in the Virginia legislature, and was of service in giving us when boys something to practice on at the country school-house till the dinner pails along the wall shook with the cry of “Liberty or death,” but there were men who could scarcely say a word in public who did as much service when in Independence hall they put their names to the document that declared our national deliverance.

We must all lay hold of the work. If the ranging conflagration of sin is to be put out it will not be by one fireman standing with a big horn making a great racket, but by men, women and boys bringing what water they can—some in hogsheds, some in pails, and some in small dippers, every one doing what he or she can, God helping all the time. “Not by might or by power, but by my spirit,” saith the Lord.—*Christian Herald.*