

In your sunny atmosphere.
 Ye are better than all the ballads
 That ever were sung or said,
 For ye are living poems
 And all the rest are dead.

The presence of childhood is a standing rebuke of some sins. Have you ever stolen quietly into a room where a little child was sleeping, and in the faint light watched the lovely peace of the soft, unlined face? Did you not feel as you stood there a tender solemnity almost akin to the mood which invades you when you stand beside the dead? That was the influence of the child's innocence. Sleep seems to purge away the earthly stains which so often soil even a child's spirit; sleep etherealises and spiritualises the child's face and we are held fast by the vision of purity. That is, perhaps, the highest moment of the child's influence. Then we feel most keenly the rebuke of our sins, and our slumbering aspiration after the stainless life wakes again. But under other conditions this quickening influence still exists. Though childhood be faulty and imperfect with small childish imperfections, still it is absolutely destitute of some blots darkening the adult soul. In some aspects childhood is like driven snow compared with manhood.

For instance, by the presence of children we are rebuked for the dullness of our conscience. A child's conscience is not enlightened and may be defective in certain directions, but when it acts at all it acts swiftly, and its voice is undenied. Sometimes, in a flash of time, we may see the transition from defiance, insolence and rage to heartbroken sorrow and shame. It is this directness, this guilelessness, this absence of self-trickery which causes a bitter pang in the world-worn watcher, who knows a little of the veils and pretences of his soul. Perhaps this contrast forces itself upon us most when we are most reminded of our own childhood. The memories of our days in the garden of youth are easily obscured in our driving life. This forgetfulness is loss. But one day some little maid goes dancing by, and—we scarcely know how—the dust is disturbed, and a awakened recollection does not sleep before the present has been matched with the past. Sometimes regret sprung thus from the glimpse of a child, is the beginning of repentance. At least the sadness of the contrast means growth in self-knowledge, as Hood so exquisitely describes

I remember, I remember
 The fir trees dark and high,
 I used to think their slender tops
 Were close against the sky,

It was a childish ignorance,
 But now 'tis little joy
 To know I'm further off from Heaven
 Than when I was a boy.

But childhood speaks most emphatically when we recognize that our attitude to it is a perpetual parable of God's attitude to us. The more we take pains to enlighten childish ignorance and to still childish fears, the more clearly we see how limited our efforts must be by the very nature of the case. There is so much it is not good to tell a child, and impossible to explain. So long as the child is a child, with many powers undeveloped and some capacities still unborn, so long must the deep pall of mystery abide. If we attempt thus without success to satisfy fully a child's fears and enquiries, we must surely understand why

the ways of God are often veiled from us who are only 'children of a larger growth.' Even the apostles of our Lord spoke of their converts as their children—their little children—and although the word was partly a term of affection it was also a term of differentiation. Sometimes it deepens into the name of reproach,—'babes.' If the majority of men can be thus widely separated from a fellow man how much broader is the chasm in experience and perception between us and the Great Father. How is it possible for us to understand all? How certain that all would not be profitable knowledge? The poet of our time has said, 'We are but infants crying in the night and with no language but a cry,' but the average man is slow to admit it. Just as children play at being grown up, we play—only the game is in earnest—at being as wise as God. What folly! Shall the voice of our little child, trustful and obedient without explanation, reach our ear in vain?

But on one point our ignorance is illumined by the presence of a child. When we think of the care spent on children of which they are ignorant, the anxieties circling round them, the toil early and late for their good, and the wealth of love in a mother's heart which a child can never know until in turn a parent, surely we shall rest in the Infinite Father with a new thought of His immeasurable goodness. His unceasing concern for us, His mindfulness of us when we forget, or are weary, and sink into sleep. When all other preachers leave us with a cold heart this little messenger who came from the warm hands of God into our bosom will not fail. May some say before the year dies

I had a little daughter
 And she was given to me,
 To lead me gently backward
 To the Heavenly Father's knee;
 That I by the force of nature,
 Might in some dim wise divine,
 The depth of His infinite patience
 To this wayward soul of mine.
 The Presbyterian.

Prayer.

O Lord, we pray that we may be penetrated by a sense of Thy presence and goodness; and we beseech of Thee that Thy goodness may lead us to repent—that we may be drawn by love and not driven by fear. Grant, we pray Thee, that we may be consecrated to Thy service in mind, in motive, in disposition, in holy emotions, and may every day and in all places where duty calls us, worship Thee. May we know how to serve Thee with fidelity, and with all our power. We pray Thee, open to us the way of duty. May we willingly take that which is pointed out to us. Let us do that which lies over against us from day to day, patiently, thoroughly, and thus approve ourselves the servants of God, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.—Selected.

The Morning Star: Singing which is not intended for worship should not be thought of in any assembly which meets in the name of our Lord. If we do not assemble in "His Name" our object in meeting is not a religious one. Do not forget what "religion" really means; it is the binding back of the heart to God.

Sparks From Other Anvils.

Christian Observer: Every now and then we see articles about the decline of interest, especially on the part of the men, in the midweek prayermeeting. Try an experiment with them. Make them feel that the prayermeeting is theirs. In order to do this, turn the meeting over to their control at least half the time. Encourage them to give personal incidents that they meet with during the week. The Sabbath day may furnish the instruction by the pastor; let the midweek prayermeeting furnish the warmth, through brief remarks by men of the church. While they are warming others, these men will warm themselves and become regular attendants.

Herald and Presbyter: A bishop of the early Church, who was a remarkable example of this virtue, was asked its secret. The venerable old man replied: "It consists in nothing more than making a right use of my eyes. In whatever state I am, I first of all look up to heaven, and remember that my principal business here is to get there; I then look down upon the earth, and call to mind how small a place I shall occupy in it when I die and am buried; I then look abroad in the world, and observe what multitudes there are who are in all respects more unhappy than myself; thus I learn where true happiness is placed, where all our cares must end, and what little reason I have to repine or complain."

The Sunday School Times: Logic and knowledge are finite and limited. Love and faith are spiritual and infinite. We can be confident, and can trust, beyond what we can see or prove within our human limitations. That which is best in the universe is not to be brought within the compass of our five senses. Said a great man, "I couldn't trust a God whom I could understand." A very small man can doubt, and often does. A great man and a child, or the childlike, can and does trust. God and a child are not hampered or cramped by the limitations of human logic. Lord, deliver us from petty doubts,—the waiting for proofs according to our ideas of proof! We ought not only to believe, but to know a vast deal more than we can prove.

The North and West: We think that the speaker who claimed before the missionary meeting of the Christian Church now assembled in our city, that Mark Twain was responsible for the falling off of receipts to their missionary work conceded far too much to that humorous gentleman's influence. It would not be very complimentary to the intelligence of givers to missions to say that they gained their conception of the value of the work from the splenetic utterances of a humorist out of humor. Even the secular press, which gave momentary support to Mark Twain's misconceptions, so thoroughly exposed the groundlessness of his attack that the advantage seemed to rest with the missionary cause. To accuse Mark Twain of causing missionary collections to fall off is to trespass upon his domain of humor. At least that is the way it looks to us Presbyterians, for the receipts to foreign missions for the first five months of this year exceed those of the previous year by twenty five thousand dollars. No, don't blame poor Mark; look again, my brother, perhaps the trouble may be found nearer home.