

"Herrings for Nothing."

BY H. K. B.

On the coast of Lancashire, on a spot where the beach shelved gently down, I took my stand one Sabbath morning. I read as loudly as possible Isaiah 55, and then engaged in prayer. So prepared to speak for Jesus I looked round for the first time, and there were hundreds of people stopping to hear. I had to abandon the sermon I had prepared and to cast myself on the Lord for a word in season, and then I commenced as follows: "I want you to think of a bitter east wind, a declining day, fast falling snow, and a short, muddy street in London, at the far east. Put these thoughts together and add to them a picture of a tall stout man in a rough great-coat and with a large comforter around his neck, buffeting through the wind and storm. The darkness is coming rapidly as a man with a basket on his head turns the corner of the street, and there are two of us on opposite sides. He cries loudly as he goes, 'Herrings! three a penny! red herrings! good and cheap at three a penny!' So crying he passes along the street, crosses at its end and comes to where I am standing at the corner. Here he pauses, evidently wishing to fraternize with somebody, as a relief from the dull times and disappointed hopes of trade. I presume I appear a suitable object, as he comes close to me and commences conversation.

"Governor, what do you think of these 'ere herrings?" As he speaks I note that he has three in his hand, while the remaining stalks are deftly balanced in the basket on his head. "Don't you think they're good?" and he offers me the opportunity of testing them by scent, which I courteously but firmly decline; and don't you think they're cheap as well?" I assert my decided opinion that they are good and cheap. "Then, look you, governor, why can't I sell 'em? Yer have I walked a mile and a half along this dismal place, offering these good and cheap uns; and nobody don't buy none!" "I do not wonder at that." I answer "the people have no work at all to do, and they are starving." "Ah! then governor," he rejoined. "I've put my foot in it this 'time: I knew they was werry poor, but I thought three a penny 'ud tempt them. But if they haven't the ha' pence they can't spend 'em, sure enough; so there's nothing for it but to carry 'em back, and try and sell 'em elsewhere." "How much will you take for the lot?" I inquired. "Do you mean profit an' all, governor?" "Yes." "Then I'll take four shillin', and be glad to get 'em." I put my hand in my pocket, produced that amount, and handed it to him. "Right! governor, thank'ee! What'll I do with 'em?" he said, as he quickly transferred the coins to his own pocket. "Go round this corner into the middle of the road, shout with all your might, 'Herrings for nothing!' and give them to every man, woman and child that comes to you till the basket is emptied." He hesitated as if there were something fraudulent in the transaction, but being told to return my money or do as I had required, he went into the middle of the adjoining street and went along shouting, 'Herrings for nothing! real good red herrings for nothing!' I stood at the corner, unseen, to watch his progress; and speedily he neared the house where a tall woman I knew stood at the first floor window, looking out upon him. "Here you are, missus," he bawled, 'herrings for nothing! a fine chance for yer; come an' take 'em!' The woman shook her head unbelievably and left the window. "Vot a fool!" said he; "but they won't be all so. Herrings for nothing!" A little child came out to look at him, and he called to her, "Yer, my dear, take these in to your mother, tell her how cheap they are—herrings for nothing." But the child was afraid of him and them, and ran indoors. So down the street, in the snowy slush and mud, went the cheap fish, the vender crying loudly as he went, 'Herrings for nothing!' and then added savagely, "Oh, you fools!" Thus he reached the very end; and then returning to retrace his steps, he continued his double cry, as he came, 'Herrings for nothing!' and then in a lower but very audible key, "Oh, you fools!" "Well!" I said to him calmly, as he reached me at the corner, "Well!" he repeated, "if yer think so! When you gave me the money for herrings as yer didn't want, I thought you was training for a lunatic 'sylum! Now I thinks all the people round here are fit company for yer. But what'll I do with the herrings, if yer don't take 'em and they won't have 'em?"

"We'll try again together," I replied; "I will come with you this time, and we'll both shout." Into the road we both went, and he shouted once more and for the last time, 'Herrings for nothing!' Then I called out loudly, "Will any one have some herrings for tea?" They heard the voice and they knew it well; and they came out at once, in twos and threes and sixes, men, women and children, all striving to reach the welcome food. As fast as I could give them from the basket I handed three to each eager applicant until all were speedily disposed of. When the basket was empty the hungry crowd who had none was far greater than those that had been supplied; but they were too late; there was no more 'Herrings for nothing.' Foremost among the disappointed was a tall woman of a bitter tongue who began vehemently, "Why haven't I got any? Ain't I as good as they? Ain't my children as hungry as theirs? Why

haven't I got any?" Before I had time to reply, the vender stretched out his arm toward her, saying, "Why, governor, that's the very woman as I offered 'em to first, and she turned up her nose at 'em." "I didn't! she rejoined passionately; 'I didn't believe you meant it! 'Yer goes without for yer unbelief,' he replied. 'Good-night and thankee, governor.'

"As I told the story upon the sea beach, the crowd gathered and increased, and looked at each other; first smiled, and then laughed outright. It was my time then, and I said, 'You cannot help laughing at the quaint story, which is strictly true. But are you sure you would not have done as they did? Nay, are you sure you are not ten thousand times worse than they? Their unbelief only cost them a hungry stomach; but what may your unbelief cost you?—God—not man—God has sent his messengers to you repeatedly for many years to offer pardon for nothing! peace for nothing! salvation for nothing! He has sent to your houses, your homes, your hearts, the most loving and tender offers that even an Almighty God could frame; and what have you replied? Have you taken the trouble to reply at all? Have you turned away in scornful unbelief, like the woman, or run away in fear like the little child? Many have heard a voice they believed; and they have received the gifts of God. Will you not come to God by Jesus now before it is forever too late? He is waiting, watching, pleading for you! There is salvation, full, free, eternal, utmost, complete redemption—all for nothing, "without money and without price."

"Though we had no place to retire to, it was good to walk up and down on the beach, showing the way of God more perfectly to some who were attracted and impressed by this commencement of a sermon by the sea."—An English Leaflet.

Tightening the Girdles.

BY REV. THÉODORE L. CUYLER.

The ancients, in Bible-lands, were accustomed to wear loose garments, and when any strenuous effort was required, they gathered the folds, and bound a girdle around their waist. The Apostle Peter—who had once girded his fisherman's tunic on in order to swim ashore to his master—exhorts his fellow-Christians to "gird up the loins of your mind." This exhortation is timely now; it contains one of the core principles of an effective useful Christian life.

We need to be reminded that Jesus Christ did not suffer for us, nor did the Holy Spirit convert us, just to make us comfortable. Getting to heaven is not the chief reason for becoming a Christian. The chief object is to do Christ's will in all things, and obedience to Jesus is the first law of Christianity. The phrase, "girding the loins," implies readiness for duty. When the children of Israel were to leave Egypt they were commanded to stand with girded loins, and with staves in their hands, ready to be off at a moment's notice. Paul's first inquiry when he was converted was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and at the finish of his grand career of obedience he exclaims, "Now I am ready to be offered." Eagerness for the fight marks the true patriot soldier; eagerness for the run made the successful Olympian racer; eagerness to do Christ's will even at sharp personal sacrifice is the trait of the most ready-hearted Christians. We ministers soon discover who are the minute-men in our churches; and we are not fit to prepare a sermon when it is regarded as a drudgery; our girdle has broken.

Another idea suggested by the Apostle's phrase is the compacting of all our powers upon the work we have in hand. Consecration requires concentration. Paul's "this one thing I do" tightened his girdles, and kept him from frittering away his life on trifles. Pericles knew only one street in Athens—the street that led from his own house to the Executive Chamber. Spurgeon used to tell me that he never went to dinner parties or public entertainments, and never would lecture for money; he did nothing but study and preach, preach until he had no longer breath to sound his Gospel trumpet. At this season of the year the feeble sun-rays may be so focused by a burning-glass as to set wood on fire! That is what we need now in our churches. A revival means focusing the faith and zeal of church-members. Under the concentrating power of the love of Jesus some people of small means and moderate talents become powerful Christians. The current phrase of a man's "pulling himself together," describes exactly what I mean; there are not a few church members who have gone to pieces for want of this girdle of spiritual concentration.

Loins girding also implies a wholesome idea of restraint. Laxity in doctrine, in social life and in church life are quite too prevalent in these days. Loose thinking often leads to loose living. The very word "religion" signifies something that both holds us together and binds us to God. If we are Christians we cannot act just as we like. The people who clamor for liberty to think as they please, and who scout at all Bible-restraints as a bondage are the very ones who drift away into vagabondage. It is not a good sign when either a minister or a church-member begins to loosen his girdle. He is preparing to

shirk hard duties, or unpopular positions, or else to drop off into indolent slumbers.

Too many people are falling all apart, and going to pieces from looseness of principles. Weakness becomes wickedness. All backslidings in the church start from loosening the hold on Christ. Conscience loosens its grip. The very garments which the professed Christian wears become entangled in all manner of worldly habits and practices until he can make no headway toward the "goal of his high calling."

There is a loud call for "revivals." They must begin in the church, with a prompt response to the roll-call of duty. Wherefore let us all gird up the loins of our souls and "be sober." The service of our crucified Lord is not child's play; and co-operating with the Holy Spirit in the winning of souls is serious business—albeit it is the happiest of all occupations. There is joy in hard, honest work—joy in slaying a sin and in saving a soul, joy in pressing forward to the crown. Those who would fail go to heaven in what Samuel Rutherford calls a "close covered chariot" may not gain admission at the gate after all; if they do, they will be ashamed to look Peter and Paul in the face. Thea! let our lamps be trimmed afresh! Eternity is just behind the door! "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth to serve them."—Evangelist.

Better than Alliance.

Kinship has its value. The boy set upon by a gang of street loafers knows where he stands a little better if his stout brother is on the sidewalk. Gladstone made a great deal of history, and he made some when he deliberately chose "kin beyond sea" as a title. Mr. Chamberlain has caught a glimpse of the future more than once, and other men in Great Britain are not now hesitating to put his thought into their words. The latest talk is of "a strong alliance," and the bright newspaper criticism of it suggests that an alliance would be weaker than some definite unity of purpose.

Both are good, but both are short of the mark. Great Britain and the United States are one—not will be, for there is no contingency about it. One in character and in general purpose regarding the world's business, not because of any alliance, past, present or to come, and because two men of the same heritage are apt to look at the world's problems in the same way. It was eighteenth century to say "blood is thicker than water." The twentieth century says, "one in purpose and character are allies." Nobody cares for papers filed in the State departments. Neither does anybody care for the casual vagaries of those Americans who hate England or the Englishmen who contemptuously regard America. These two nations cannot separate, if they would, and they are sure not to try.

Alliance is a fetter. Many things in British foreign politics this country has not admired. As many in American politics, no doubt, have met British disapproval. But it is a great help to each nation that the moral approval of the other is desired. Something indefinitely stronger than alliance comes when two great nations think the same thing right and worth fighting for. When Great Britain was hampered by the so-called Powers in Greco-Turkish affairs, one strong word would have shown a purpose which America shared. When Great Britain has seemed entangled in Asiatic trickery, a straight and manly resistance to all restrictions of civilization and commerce would have been felt by millions in this country. When the United States strikes against Spanish tyranny in Cuba, the British heart answers. The two nations, for some things, are not two. It is altogether better that they seem to be one only where they are one.

That is not an alliance, a pitiful thing of shreds and patches, worthy of the nations which have no honorable object to fight for. If ever America and Britain stand against the world, it will be for a cause which the English-speaking conscience on both sides of the water holds good. That cause may arise tomorrow, or after thirty years; but the two nations, with all their power and all their wealth, will be found behind it instantly, without a word said. Britain knows and America knows that all the nations together never can disturb an alliance which is a natural unity of conviction and of character. Also all the world knows that a thing held unjust by British and American opinion will not easily prevail. The two nations are both ready to have convictions add to act upon them in any case of need. Fifty thousand alliances and protocols would not mean as much for the future.—N. Y. Tribune.

If anything was wanting to show the extraordinary high rate of mortality among the officers of the American army engaged in the battles before Santiago, it is supplied by the war department that with the death of Captain Dodge the Twenty-fourth infantry has lost every captain of the regiment. All the other captains had been killed in action when Captain Dodge, the sole survivor, was stricken with yellow fever, which led to his death.