

## Dr. W. H. P. Faunce on the Answer to Pessimism.

Text, Psalms, iv: 6. "There be many that say who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."

"One might almost think that this was written this morning, and the ink not yet dry, so fresh, vital and up-to-date is our Bible. DeQuincey, you remember, divided all the books of the world into two classes, the literature of knowledge and the literature of power. An almanac, a newspaper, a geography belongs to the literature of knowledge. Its sole aim is to tell us more things, to increase the number of things we know. But a poem, a novel, a sermon aims not to increase the number of things we know, but to enlarge the soul of the knower; not to put more facts into our mental catalogue, but to give more power and dignity to the spirit of man. Now, the books of knowledge are always getting out of date; the books of power are youngest when oldest. The books of knowledge, with their ponderous indexes and catalogues, are always on their way to the waste basket. The books of power, like the fine fiber of some old violin, gain in resonance and moving quality as the years pass. Take down from the shelf of some library here in Brooklyn a work on physics published ten years ago. What can it tell you? Take some work on medicine of fifteen or twenty years ago. It is already lumber. Take down the geography that our father used to study at school. It has pictures of the great American desert. But take down Plato, Milton, Carlyle, Lincoln, who deal with principles, rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, and these men enter our lives as a calming, steady presence, forever modern, forever near.

"Now, I wish that all the young people here could always remember, as they open the Bible, that it belongs to the literature of power; that would solve the thousand perplexities of every Biblical student. It does indeed give us facts concerning Moses, and Paul, and Jesus. But its supreme aim is not to tell us on what summit Moses died, or what documents he wrote, but to enable us, like him, to endure as seeing the invisible. Not to explain on what island Paul was shipwrecked, but to impart the Pauline quality of soul. Not to tell us where Capernaum and Golgotha are, but 'that believing ye might have life through his name.' Take, for example, this fourth Psalm. A man might read it a thousand times without acquiring a single bit of new information. It does not aim to tell us anything new, but to throw light on every problem which we are facing this morning. The third Psalm is the morning hymn, the fourth Psalm an evening hymn. It is easy to sing in the morning, when the sun is shining, and the enemy are out of sight.

"There be many. Who are they? First, they are the disappointed men and women. Here is a man we used to know ten years ago, bright, keen, vivacious, energetic. Now as we meet him the light had faded from his eye, the elasticity has gone from his step, he has joined the great army of the disappointed. He set his heart years ago on obtaining certain things that the passing of the years has made it clear will never become his. His life has failed. His position has been lost. His possessions have taken flight in a single night. He has been displaced by the very progress of the social order. When any army is marching forward, if it quickens its pace, the weaker soldiers must fall by the wayside. And so the very fact that the world is sweeping onward means that some men are dropping every year. They are flung back ways because the race are marching forward.

"Now, how shall we deal with this army of the disappointed? Every one of us knows this army, if we are not in it ourselves. How shall we deal with these men? With argument? We can, indeed, prove that the good in life outweighs the evil. We can demonstrate from the statistics of the life insurance companies that the good do not die young, that death does love a shining mark. But, did you ever try to argue with a man in sorrow? If so, you will never try it a second time. Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Here is the remedy of the Psalmist. How full the figure is. The face of God is thought of as some luminary, swinging up over the horizon and transfiguring the landscape of life. A man, for example, arrives at some strange place after dark and, looking out of the window before he retires, he can make nothing of the country around him. The trees and the houses seem all to mingle in the shadow. Here and there a lake, or is it a river? feebly reflects the starlight. But all the paths end in blackness, and a rough, wild, unintelligible country it seems. The next morning he rises and looks out of that same window and now there is a flush in the eastern sky, a stream of light behind the hills, the mountain peaks begin to glow with the light, the paths run clear in the morning and the country becomes plain. The sunrise does not give us a new world; it shows us the meaning of this world.

"But there is another class of people that are always crying: 'Who will show us any good?' I mean the disillusioned by success. As some one has said: 'The

sovereign source of melancholia is repletion.' The quickest way to make any man weary of his life is to give him all his heart's desire. The struggle for the unattained is the secret of joy. Here is a man who has been giving his years to a reckless round of pleasure. Now you see him waking up to find that the deepest needs of his soul are still untouched. Or, there is another man who has given twenty-five years to the accumulation of knowledge, and at last we see him, like Dr. Casaubon, in 'Middlemarch,' dying with the stores of knowledge all around him, which he does not know how to use. Have you ever noticed that the pessimism of our modern life never comes from poverty and deprivation, but always from abundance and from culture and from luxury? In the slums of the great cities you never find pessimists, you never find men despair of life, very rarely, at least, do you find them among the poorest and most wretched of our cities. But you find the professed pessimist among those who have had poured upon them everything the world can offer, and then realize that the whole world can never give them what they need. It is not in what can be poured into a man's life that can give him peace and gladness and victory over time and death. It is in the spirit we carry within, the Spirit in league with God, that knows that the Father of Spirits is our Father, and that neither life nor death can separate us from him.

"If any man here this morning will act on what he knows to be true, every truth in the universe will begin to come toward him and become his own possession. If you say you cannot believe some things in the Old Testament, then believe the New. If you cannot believe the New, then bow down and begin to pray. If you find you cannot pray, then begin to live as Jesus Christ lived in Judaea. Act on what you know and God will give you grace in all you need. I remember, a few years ago, a young man was about to graduate from one of our New England colleges. He had intended to study for the ministry, but as the end of his course came he found himself mentally entangled. He came to the president of the college and said: 'I cannot be a minister. In the world there is a certain doctrine of belief, and I never can preach that. There is something in the Scriptures which I never can believe.' And the president said: 'My dear fellow, I want you to go to your room this afternoon and take a sheet of paper and write on it a list of all the things you do believe beyond a peradventure, and on which you are willing at once to act.' Somewhat chagrined, the student went to his room and took a sheet of foolscap and wrote at the top: 'First, I believe that the life of Jesus of Nazareth is the life I ought to live on this earth and I am willing to begin it now. To his surprise a second proposition occurred to him which he believed beyond a peradventure, and before two hours had gone by he had covered both sides of the sheet with the things of which he was absolutely certain and on which he was willing to act. I need not tell you it was the turning point in his experience. A little time ago I had the pleasure of setting apart to the Christian ministry this man, and he is today one of the happiest workers for God and man to be found in all our country. Act this morning on the light that is shining and step by step the pathway shall appear up to the very throne of God.

One thing more. Most of all do we need constant fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord. If some of you here have been so prospered in life that you have never for a moment lost heart or hope, that you never have seen occasion to doubt or fear, let me tell you life will have for you, as for others, its valley of the shadow of death. But why was not Jesus one of the disappointed? If ever a man in the world had a right to be a pessimist, it was he. When he found that the world did not want him, that the rulers of the state had no place for him, that the church of Judaea, that God had been training for fifteen hundred years for his coming, did not want him, why was he not in despair and hopeless? Nay, he said, 'I am not alone, but the Father is with me.' Church and state might be against him, all the powers of earth and hell might be against him, but the Father was with him. And then he said, 'My joy I give unto you.' Not the joy of indifference, which sees and does not care, but the joy of one who sees all and sees through all to the living God. Just as in one of Carot's pictures you see in the foreground the gnarled and blackened trunks of the trees, and beyond all and behind all the clear shining of the unperturbed sky. And so long as the story of Christ's life is told on earth there will be hundreds of men and women who will rise and say, 'If he conquered, I can conquer, too; if he overcame, I can overcome. My ancestral inheritance, my environment, the temptations of my business, the difficulties of my home, of my temperament, I may overcome, and I will in his strength.'

"Where is Jesus Christ today? Where is Jesus of Nazareth now? I ask Matthew Arnold, and I hear him say:

"Now He is dead, far hence He lies  
In that lone Syrian town,  
And on His grave, with shining eyes,  
The Syrian stars look down."

Where is Jesus Christ to-day? I ask John G. Whittier, and I hear him say:

"Warm, sweet, tender, even yet a present help is He  
And Faith hath yet its Olivet, and Love its Galilee."

"But you trust in this Christ of Nazareth, and then while many are saying, 'Who will show us any good,' you shall hear another voice, 'Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself.'"—Brooklyn Eagle.

## An Elegy.

H. F. WAKING.

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day," etc.  
"Lord thou hast been our dwelling place," etc.

How often, with pensive pleasure, we have read and re-read them both! What Gray's elegy in a country churchyard is in English poetry the nineteenth psalm is among Hebrew poems. How often it is read at the burial of our dead. Sublime is it in the simplicity of its imagery, in the depth of its feeling and in the height of its conception of God. In his quiet passage to his mighty victory on the Plains of Abraham, Wolfe's heart was helped by Gray's greatest poem. In the current that carries us to our last great fight well may we listen to the strains of helpful melancholy of the great Hebrew poem. Listen to its lessons on the certainty of death and the brevity of life. "Mene, Mene," numbered, numbered are our days.

We all must die. Though life be filled with uncertainties its close is certain. One event happeneth to all: to the mighty monarch and to the baby boy; to the Christian President killed with lawless hand and to the anarchist Czarlogge to be killed by the hand of law; to the righteous Son of Man and to the two robbers one on his right hand and the other on his left. Appropriately in our papers are the notices of births placed near the notices of deaths. Every birth means a death sometime. Every cradle means a grave somewhere. With English hearts we like to visit where the family is large but the larger the family the greater the sorrowing sometime. There is some certain place, some certain time for each one of us to die and every moment brings us nearer to that time and every movement brings us nearer to that place. We sleep and the train carries us towards the end of the journey. We awake and the journey is continued.

"And our hearts, though stout and brave  
Still like muffled drums are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave."

We must die soon. Though the time of death is uncertain, it is certain that it is soon. It is soon gone and we fly away. Life is but a vapor (James). Death the robber (Jeremiah) will soon break into our homes to carry off those we prize and love; will soon break into our bodies and carry us away.

We may die very soon. It may be to-morrow. It may be to-day. Say not then: "To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city and spend a year there and trade and get gain." Say rather: "If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that." It may be to-night. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." But God said unto him: "Thou fool! see, this night is thy soul required of thee."

Tick, tick, tick, and each tick a death knell for those above us, about us, beneath us. Tick, tick, tick, certainly soon, and may be very soon, time will tick its last tick for us. Our death knell is near. Of late in the circle of the world, "How have the mighty fallen," and from our smaller circles (the smaller, the nearer and dearer) loved ones have "slipped away" and we are given another Thanatopsis. It is needed, for we are saying to our undertakers: "Show us flowers in your windows; keep your coffins from our sight." We are living as though to our ungodly minds the day of life was to last a thousand years and eternity were but a distant day. If our lives here determine our eternal destiny, since our days are numbered, let us number our days and get us an heart of wisdom. If in this little while our opportunities for sending messages of thanksgiving and fruits of thanksgiving to the throne that aways the future, are winged youths on tip toe for the flight it behooves us to be wise to prize and not despise the little day of life. Let us eat, drink and be masters of our fate for to-morrow we shall live according as we have spent to-day. Let us be men, with Anglo-Saxon love of fair play, above back biting and cowardly striking in the darkness, above the littleness of our little day, above the meanness of a narrow ministry, above the vision

"Of comfortable meles, whom what they do  
Teaches the limit of the just and true  
(And for each doing they require not eyes)"

With pure-eyed vision into the things of God and prayer-brought power from the throne of God, let us be Gods not dogs. Let us follow in his steps who went about doing good, saying: "My master is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." Then shall we be able to pray the prayer with which this elegy on the brevity of life is so appropriately brought to a close: "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; Yes, the work of our hands establish thou it."