

An Eye on Heaven.

BY THEODORE L. CUTLER, D. D.

A wise man who is setting out for a foreign country—especially if he intends to reside there—will study the localities in that land, and seek to become acquainted with the language and the customs of its people. His thoughts will be much upon it. But do the great majority even of true Christians spend much time or thought about Heaven? Yet it is to be their dwelling place through innumerable ages. At no distant day—perhaps within a few days to some of us—the veil that hides the eternal world may drop, and the gates of the Father's House may open before our astonished vision! If Heaven is ready for Christ's redeemed people, then surely they should be making ready for Heaven.

We ought to be thinking more about our future and everlasting home. If our treasures are there, there our hearts should be also in frequent and joyous anticipations. John Bunyan tells us in his Pilgrim that his "heart waxed warm about the place whether he was going." This world is not our rest. It is only our temporary lodging place, our battle ground to fight sin and Satan, our vineyard in which to labor for our Master and our fellowmen until sundown, our training school for the development of character and youth in grace. A thoroughly spiritual person who makes Jesus Christ real and the powers of the world to come real, and who has set his affection on things above, must inevitably have some deep meditations upon his home, and his magnificent inheritance. He loves to read about it, and gathers up eagerly the few grand, striking things which his Bible tells him about the jasper walls and the gates of pearl, and the trees that bear twelve manners of fruit, and the crystal streams that flow flashing from beneath the throne of God. Among his favorite hymns are "Jerusalem the Golden" and the "Shining Shore," they are to him like rehearsals for his part in the sublime oratories of Heaven. Sometimes when cares press heavily or bodily pains was sharp, or bereavements darken his house, he gets homesick he says: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove; then I would fly away, and be at rest!"

Such devout meditations do not prove any man to be a dreamy mystic. They are not the pious sentimentalizings of mourners of whom this world has lost all its charms, or of enthusiasts whose religion evaporates in mere emotion. The hundred-handed Paul constantly reminds his fellow-workers that their citizenship is in heaven. The godly Samuel Rutherford, who was said to be always studying, always preaching, and always visiting the sick, found time to feed on anticipations of Paradise; he tells us that he often longed to stand at the outer side of the gates of the New Jerusalem and look through a crevice of the door and see Christ's face. He exclaims, "Oh, time, run fast! Oh, fair day, when wilt thou dawn? Oh, shadows, flee away! Oh, well-beloved Bridegroom, be thou to me like the roe or the young hart on the mountains!" No man in modern times has written any volumes so full of heavenly aspirations as Baxter's "Saints Everlasting Rest." Yet Baxter was one of the most practical of philanthropists. While meditating on the Better Country, he wore his busy life out in striving to make England a better country, and the town of Kidderminster was revolutionized by his ceaseless labors for the bodies and the souls of its inhabitants. Intense spirituality and intense practicality were beautifully united in the late Dr. A. J. Gordon of Boston. If he kept one eye on Heaven, he kept the other eye wide open to see the sins and snares and the sorrows of his fellow-creatures all around him. I verily believe that if we thought more about Heaven and realized more its ineffable blessedness, we should strive harder to get others there; we should not be content to travel thither on a path only wide enough for one.

It is no wonder that some professed Christians do not catch any more distinct glimpses of the celestial world. Their vision is obscured. As a very small object when held close to the eye will even hide the sun at noonday, so a Christian may hold a dollar so close to the eye of his soul as to shut out both Christ and Heaven, too. Fishes down in the Mammoth Cave become eyeless at last; and so will any of us lose even the faculty of seeing if we shut ourselves in a cavern of grinding worldliness, or utter unbelief. Perhaps some reader of this article may despondently say: "Well, I never get any sight of Heaven; I am all in a mist; nothing but clouds and darkness before my eyes." My friend, look where you were standing. You were in Satan's marshy grounds and among the quagmires where the fogs dwell continually. Even since you left the "King's highway," ever since you forsook the straight path of duty, ever since you quit honest praying and Christian work, and God's Book for your ledger; and the service of Christ for the service of Mammon, you have strayed away into the Devil's territory. Heaven is not visible to backsliders. And never until your feet take hold again of that straight path of sincere, unselfish obedience to Jesus Christ, and your eyes get washed out with some sincere tears of repentance, you will have any fresh, gladdening glimpses of that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Throw off your load, my friend, and the sins that so easily beset you, and getting your feet again in the track, "run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. When you get your eye

fixed again on Christ, you will no longer complain that Heaven is utterly out of sight.

Those whose conversation is in Heaven, and who keep it constantly before them, have abundant source of spiritual joy. They renew their strength as they push upward and heavenward. What is it to them that the road is long and sometimes the hills of Difficulty are steep, that there are often lions in the way, and there are crosses to be carried, that there are some valleys of the death shadow to be threaded, and that not far ahead is that river over which there is no bridge? All these things do not disturb them. Heaven lieth at the end of the way, clothed in purple and in golden light. The Mount Zion is there—the city of the living God and the innumerable company of angels, some of whom may turn out to be old friends who have had their eyes on us ever since we were born into Christ. From the hill-tops we can, with the spy-glass of faith, bring Heaven so near that we can see its bulwarks with salvation strong and its shining streets of gold.

These views of the certain and assuredly promised inheritance of glory ought to quicken our zeal prodigiously. The time is short and shortening every day. If we are to have treasures there, we must be securing them; no time is to be lost. If we are to lead any souls there, we must be out after them. If we are to wear any crown there, however humble, we must win it. Christian zeal depends on inward warmth; and much of that heat must come from Heaven. "When" exclaimed grand old Baxter—"when, oh my soul, hast thou been warmest? When hast thou most forgot thy wintry sorrows? Is it not when thou hast got above, closest to Jesus Christ, and hast conversed with him, and viewed the mansions of glory and filled thyself with sweet fortresses and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world?" Certain it is that he who loves not Christ and his fellowmen loves not Heaven; and he who loves not Heaven is not very likely to see Heaven. A true life is just a tarrying and toiling in this earthly tent for Christ until we go into the mansions with Christ. Fellow-workers, the miles to Heaven are few and short; let us be found busy in heart and hand when the summons sounds, "Come up hither!"—Independent.

Pilgrimages in India.

Passing through Chicacole, are they? Yes, come and see—a silver palanquin, clothes of gold, banners waving, Sepoys and Lancers, Chobdars and Sowars, a youthful Raja riding a gaily caparisoned steed and forty or more followers in the train. Who are they? The Maharajah of Vizagapatam with her son and retinue, Vizagapatam? That is where Miss De Prazer lives and this must be the Ranees who so amply repay her medical services!

Yes, they came to Chicacole Road Station on the 26th; now they are taking the eighteen mile drive to Sreekrumam where the Ranees will worship the celebrated tortoise god, bathe in the waters of the sea into which so many holy rivers flow and give gifts to greedy bramins who will flock from far and near rejoicing that a Ranees, a wealthy Ranees has come.

Did she come direct from Vizagapatam? Oh no! Did you not read about it in the "Madras Mail"? She has been on a long pilgrimage. Her husband, the distinguished Maharajah Sir Gajapatee Row K. C. I. E., died recently. After many preparations the Ranees started for Benares. The Raja there kindly lent her palace and the Ranees placed her goshaboa which is artistically built with arches, pillars, gay coverings and screens, at their guests' disposal. The latter's first act was to visit the Kalighat and there while Vedic mantras were being chanted and other ceremonies performed she dropped into the sacred river a portion of the ashes of her departed husband. The ashes were mixed with precious stones, gold and sovereigns and all was covered with an exquisite silk cloth. Money was given to five thousand bramins and "Ganga Putras," men who frequent the shores of the Ganges to say mantras and offer libations of water for devout bathers in return for the shiny rupee.

The visiting Maharanees approached the temple. The visitors and attendants withdrew; then she entered into the presence of the deity. One hundred and one cocoanuts were broken, flowers in abundance were strewn around and several brass vessels of milk were poured on Sivas' image. Leaving Benares the Ranees visited Allahabad and Gaya; and when she returns from the place to which she is now going, she will proceed to Rajahnudry and bathe in the waters of the sacred Godavery.

Five places are included in the pilgrimage and in each place with great reverence and ceremony; a portion of her husband's ashes mixed with gold and precious stones is dropped into the respective sacred rivers; in each place she feeds thousands of bramins, fakirs and poor people; in each place the Hindu charities such as: "Godanams" (the giving of corn and money), "Salagranadams" (the giving of precious stones), "Dasadanams" (the giving of food, cloth, gold, etc., to the number of ten gifts), "Bhudanams" (gifts in land), "Kauajadanams" (the giving of the marriage expenses of a virgin girl), "Ghrudanams" (the gift of houses) and all other Danams prescribed by the Puranas are performed. In every place she devoutly performs the "Abishakam," that is the pouring of water on the idol to the repetition of mantras.

"No," says the educated bramin, with whom we are conversing, "I never went to Benares, but my grandmother and great-grandmother did. It was very easy for this Ranees to go! Why, she could reach Benares in three days by train but it took my relatives from six to eight months and what hardships they endured!"

This year 400,000 pilgrims met at Hardwar, the sacred spot on the bank of the Ganges in the United Provinces. The festival which they wished to celebrate is one of peculiar sanctity being observed every twelfth year. A century ago it is estimated that from two to two and a half million pilgrims assembled there and what a catastrophe then happened! The propitious moment arrived; the signal was given and as a result of the rush made to plunge into the bathing ghat (on the wall of which is Vishnu's foot-print) over four hundred were drowned in the sacred river! The Government has since constructed a ghat of sixty steps, one hundred feet in width.

This year only fifteen plague deaths are reported, but cholera broke out among the pilgrims, resulting in two thousand deaths in the Punjab and over eight thousand in the United Provinces.

That the soul may be saved and have joy for aye and aye, how the devout Hindu will wander and wander, bathe and bathe and give, give, give the greedy throngs of sinful men. Then the devotee will return home and sit down to meditate saying: "Well, I'm not so very happy after all but I have done what I could, yes all I could to bring joy to the dear departed and blessedness to my own soul." How pitiful! and how we long that this deluded people may fully understand that "we are saved by grace through faith; and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God."

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Building for God.

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Sixteen years after the return of the Israelites from their captivity in Babylon, Haggai was sent to them with a message of warning and hope. The temple hill was still covered with debris. The people had spent their time in rebuilding their own fortunes. They were living in ceiled houses while the house of God lay waste. As a punishment for this criminal neglect God had stayed the dew of heaven, and sent the drought. He blew upon their wealth and it vanished; their fields were soon as waste as the temple. Thus we read between the lines of this prophecy that there is a saving which is losing. We may earn wages and put them into a bag with holes. God can bring it about that our gain shall be loss and our wealth shall become poverty.

Another principle which runs through this brief book is, what ought to be done can be done. The people felt that they were not able to build the house of God. It was all they could do to look after their families. To reproduce the temple on a small, cheap scale would be a national dishonor, and they were waiting for the return of financial prosperity, when it would be easy for them to do what ought to be done. Haggai comes upon the scene with a ringing exhortation, "Consider your ways," and this way of laying up money for yourselves while God's cause is suffering needs to be changed. If they are not rich as they used to be, the temple ought to be built. What ought to be done can be done, and what can be done must be done, God is on the side of what ought to be, and his power can make it possible. It is a good motto for any young man to adopt as he starts in life, I will undertake what ought to be done, believing that in the strength of God it can be done.

But the great moral lesson for us, which is the gist of the book, is that the important part of life is building for God: The people were bringing upon themselves financial, political and moral ruin by a selfish policy. If they could prosper they must put God first in their plans.

First of all, they must be temple builders. A temple, you know, is a house set apart for God's use. Every nook and corner of it is holy. God is expected to fill it with his glory, and each one of us should be a temple builder. The book which the early Christians seem to have read next to their Bible was the "Shepherd of Hermas." It was an allegory, the Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress of the early centuries. In it were some things that ought to be remembered. The shepherd says, "Pray not longer against iniquities, pray for righteousness." In other words, do not spend life simply fighting evils, but build up the good. The way to banish the darkness is to let in the light. If you would get rid of devils, introduce angels. Do not empty the house and leave it, though swept and garnished. If you do, evil will soon fill it again.

In another part of this "Shepherd of Hermas" a temple is building which stands in the midst of twelve mountains some of them black, one of them very white. The stones from the white mountain of childhood are ready to be put into the temple, and the stones in the black mountain must be made like the white stones of childhood before they can be built into its walls. The four angel-builders are truth, sincerity, patience and love. These early Christians had a proper conception of life. With truth, sincerity, patience and love each one was building a temple for God.

Are you building a home? Build it for God. To build it for wife and children is a noble motive, better to be sure