

Light at Evening Time.

By Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.

Yes, 'till its truest, deepest secret lingers
ever in the deepest depths untold."

Such, then, are some of the great secrets of the Lord. They are singularly unlike many of those by which we are surrounded in life. As one has written: "There are no statistics of broken hearts, nor do we know what torture chambers are hidden away in the bosoms of those around us. We do not hear their cries and groans, for the walls are very thick. We do not see the writhings and contortions of despair, for a smile masks all. If only the inarticulate groans of the weary and miserable, who lie up and down our great cities, hidden with their grief, could once be rendered audible, no human ear could endure it and live.

Now and then, like a broken lute, some oppressed heart utters one dying wail and passes into silence. We hear it and wonder for a while, but there is not much time to listen, and the voices in our hearts are too clamorous to let us hearken long; and so we all learn the truth of those words: "The heart knoweth its own bitterness."

Ah! secret griefs, cares and sins rest heavily on many hearts; they lie on many pathways—a shadow broad and deep; they are thorns thick and sharp in many pillow-spectres grim and ghastly flitting to and fro in many homes. Some of the men who are most familiar with these dark secrets know nothing of the secret of the Lord, nor do they seem as if they cared to know.

Thank God for the secrets which He has already revealed to us and is revealing more fully day by day. There are some which we must die to know; some which the great future alone can reveal to me.

"I shall soon," said a dying atheist, "know the great secret." And so shall we.

A few more years—or it may be days—shall roll, and the veil will be lifted, and the solemn mystery of eternity be disclosed.

We know not what secrets are still in reserve. Heaven is made known to us as an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled—nay, as our Father's house, and therefore our true home.

We sometimes feel as if this true home were very near to us—as if we could see those who dwell there, and could hear some of the notes of their song; nevertheless, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. It is, however, our confident and rejoicing hope that the glory shall one day be revealed to, and in, us.

Oh, the gladness of that hour when we have light and blessedness, of which now we amid but the vaguest idea, it will be ours to exclaim: "And this is heaven. We had often thought of it, and spoken about it; oft tried to picture it; oft made it the theme of song while on pilgrimage, but here it is at last, and how different from our imaginings and pleturings; infinitely better than the best we thought of." Here at last is the crowning secret. From the very hour that we began to fear the Lord, we began to learn His secret; now we have the climax: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

In closing this brief series of papers, it is well to emphasize the condition upon which the secret of the Lord is imparted. It is that of "fearing Him," or, to use a word more in harmony with the genius of the New Testament, "Loving Him."

By the gaze of God the youngest, the feeblest, the poorest, the most illiterate, may love the Lord; and so the secret of the Lord is within the reach of all. They who love most stand nearest to Him, and see most fully and clearly into His heart and mind.

Church-going, the keeping of the Sabbath, is not religion; but religion hardly lives without it.—F. W. Robertson.

God's Word is an inexhaustible jewel-bed. What a gem of the first water is this beautiful text: "At evening time it shall be light!" Like a many-sided diamond, it flashes out as many truths as it has polished sides. As the diamond has the quality of glistening in dim and darksome places, so this passage shines brightly in seasons of trouble and despondency. Old people may well put on their spectacles of faith and see what a rare and precious verse it is. The people of God who are under a cloud may also find in it the foretoken of better things to come.

The passage gleams out from one of the olden Jewish prophets—from the prophecies of Zachariah, of whom we know very little except that he flourished about the time of the return from Babylon, 520 years before Christ's advent. He is that cheerful seer who pictures the streets of Jerusalem as yet to be filled with old men leaning on their staves and little boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. The text occurs at the close of a remarkable passage, which reads as follows in a close translation: "And it shall be in that day that there shall not be the light of the glittering orbs, but densely thick darkness. But there shall be one day (it is known to Jehovah) when it shall not be day and night, for at the evening time it shall be light."

Many Bible scholars count this passage to be clearly prophetic of the Millennium. Our good brothers of the literalistic school quote it as predicting Christ's personal reign, when His "feet shall again stand on the Mount of Olives." Into that controversy we shall not enter, being quite satisfied that, while of that day and hour knoweth no man, yet "it is known to Jehovah." The beautiful text is so rich in spiritual suggestions that we are quite satisfied to catch some gleamings of the diamond.

1. The very essence of hope is in this inspiring verse. Some of us may recall a weary climb from the Vale of Zermatt up the rough acclivities of the Riffelberg, amid chilling mists and swirling gusts of tempest. The icy vapors penetrated to the marrow of our bones. At the Riffel all was blinding fog. We pushed on and upward, until, as we stood upon the Gornier Grat, the mighty caravan of clouds moved off and left the "body of the heavens in its clearness." Yonder rose the Weisshorn, a pyramid of silver, and the peaks of Monte Rosa flashed in crimson and gold. We had been suffocated in the storm and fog all day, but at evening time it was light.

This had been the ten thousand times repeated experience of God's children. Gray-haired Jacob in his loneliness walls out, "Joseph is dead; Simeon is dead; now they take Benjamin also. All these things are against me." Presently the returning cavalcade arrives to tell him that Joseph is Governor of Egypt, and that he is invited to come and spend his sunset of life in the best of the land that Pharaoh can offer. A long, troubled day has the patriarch weathered through, but at evening time it is light. It is a part of God's discipline with us to hide His throne in clouds and darkness. The office of faith is to hold fast to the fact that behind those clouds a loving Father dwells upon that throne. It is the office of hope to look for the clearing of the clouds by and by. If we had no storms we should never appreciate the blue sky. The trial of the tempest is the preparation for the warm afterglow of sunshine. Blind unbelief is continually railing at God, charging Him with cruelty and scouting the idea of a special Providence of all-wise love. But faith whispers, "Think it not strange, or as though some strange thing happened unto thee. God seeth the end from the beginning. To the

upright there ariseth light in darkness. All things work together for good to them that love Him." Hope bids us push on and upward. Push upward, and you will

"Hear hope singing, sweetly singing,
Softly in an undertone,
Singing as if God had taught her
It is better further on."

Only keep pressing higher, and closer to Jesus, instead of wandering downward into doubt and sullen despair.

The darkness may be thick about thee now, my brother, but the Christian life is a walk of faith. God never deceives His children. If we but keep fast hold of the guiding hand we shall find the road to be not one step longer or harder than is best for us. God has piloted every saint through this very road and up these very hills of difficulty. It will be better further on. Every chastening of a believer's soul lies at the end of a painful ordeal. Every success worth the having lies at the end of brave, protracted toil. Twenty years of storm must be battled through by Wilberforce and Clarkson before negro emancipation is enacted by the British Parliament. At evening time the sky was crimson with the flush of victory.

2. This passage has a beautiful application to a Christian old age. Many people have a silly dread of growing old, and look upon gray hairs as a standing libel. But, if life is well spent, its Indian summer ought to bring a full granary and a golden loaf. The spiritual light at the gloaming of life becomes mellow; it is strained of impurities and impurities. The aged believer seems to see deeper into God's Word and further into God's heaven. Not every human life has a golden sunset. Some suns go down under a cloud. At evening time it is cold and dark. I have been looking lately at the testimonies left by two celebrated men who died during my boyhood. One of them was the king of novelists, the other was the king of philanthropists. Both had lost their fortunes and lost their health.

The novelist wrote as follows: "The old post-chaise gets more shattered at every turn of the wheel. Windows will not put up; doors refuse to open and shut. Sicknesses come thicker and faster, friends become fewer and fewer. Death has closed the long, dark avenue upon early loves and friendships. I look at them through the grated door of a burial place filled with monuments of those once dear to me. I shall never see the threesome and ten and shall be summed up at a discount." Ah! that is not a cheerful sunset of a splendid literary career. At evening time the air smells of the sepulcher.

Listen now to the old Christian philanthropist, whose inner life was hid with Christ in God. He writes: "I can scarce understand why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be just as happy without a fortune as with one. Sailors on a voyage drink to 'friends atern' till they are half way across, and after that it is 'friends ahead.' With me it has been 'friends ahead' for many a year." The veteran pilgrim was getting nearer home. At evening time it was light.

3. What a contrast there is between the death bed of the impenitent and that of the adopted child of God whose hope is anchored to Jesus. The one is dark; a fearful looking forward to a wrath to come. The other is the earnest expectation of an endless day which lies beyond the glorious sunset. I have just come from the sick room of a woman whose life is ebbing away amid intense bodily suffering. It is one of the most cheerful spots in this sorrow-laden world. Jesus is watching by that bedside. He administers the cordials. He stays up that sinking head. "I am with you always" is to her the promise and foretoken of that other state of joy, "where I am ye shall be also." At evening time that chamber of death is light!