

AN IMPRESSIVE INCIDENT.

I was travelling through the western portion of the State of Texas in the autumn of 1889, and stopped one night at a little village called Youngsfort, having probably seventy-five inhabitants. There was no inn, and I was entertained by an old settler at his residence.

About midnight I was awakened from sleep by loud voices and the hurrying of feet. I arose, and looking out, saw a bright light about two hundred yards away. Hastily dressing, I found that one end of a new church building was on fire.

The house had just been erected at a cost of perhaps five hundred dollars by the people of the village. They were all poor, and its loss would prove a sad blow to them. I think I never saw such signs of distress as were exhibited by many of the spectators. From their excited remarks I learned that a 'revival' meeting was announced to be held the next day in the building, and the impression seemed to be that some enemy had set fire to the church.

Up to this time the fire was confined to the outside of the wall at the back of the building, and the flames were making slow headway. Water, even for drinking purposes, was very scarce that fall. None, in fact, could be obtained to extinguish the flames. The excited people were running impotently about, thinking it was useless to attempt to stay the fire.

At this juncture a man appeared in the crowd. He was about forty-five years of age, black-bearded, with a homely, earnest face. For a moment he stood staring at the fire. Then, flinging his arms above his head and gazing into the sky, in a strong, earnest voice he began to pray. His words and tones were the embodiment of entreaty.

'Father,' he cried, 'pardon us, pardon us. Thou of whom we have been told that no sparrow falls to the ground but its loss is felt by Thee, Thou hast known our efforts, our self-denials for Thy sake. How we have builded this lowly temple to Thee with much hardship. How we are without means to build another. How we meant, if in Thy wisdom another day dawned upon us, that Thy dear word should be preached here. We are unworthy. Our very prayers may be selfish and unworthy. But, O Thou Searcher of hearts, Thou knowest it was for Thy glory.'

'Many hungry souls will come with tomorrow's dawn to be refreshed at Thy altar, and we, stricken with loss, how can we satisfy them? Thy cause will be homeless here. Thy people will return with empty hearts—some, perhaps, to ways of sin. Consider, we beseech Thee, our cry. Remember in help and sympathy our loss. This home is our all. It has been our delight in anticipation to think that in it Thy name could be upheld, and immortal souls brought to Thee. O Lord, our God, stay these flames. Come Thou to our rescue. Only, if our wish lacks submission to Thy will, and is unworthy in Thy sight, forgive. But if worthy, grant to Thy servants a gracious answer, that this threatened calamity may be stayed. We plead forgiveness for those who have transgressed against us, and unto Thee, O Thou Divine Helper, be honor and glory and praise and power forever and ever. Amen.'

The prayer was hardly more than two minutes in length, during which the fixed attention of the crowd of people had been held, and their hearts touched by the preacher. Few had noticed the black wall of cloud that was sweeping with almost hurricane fury down from the north-west. The last words of the prayer had barely been spoken, when there fell slight drops of rain. Silence followed. There was not a sound of leaf or wind to break the stillness. Then, in an instant, flashed forth a blinding flood of light almost above us, and a burst of thunder that made the very earth rock beneath our feet.

A wild cry burst from the people, a cry half of fear, half of faith and thanksgiving. Shrieking in its might a hurricane hurled past us, tearing the flame from the burning wall, and heaving upon it a drench of rain that flooded the crowd of trembling people and the endangered building.

In the fright and confusion, amid the roar and turmoil of the tempest, it seemed hardly more than an instant from the moment the first drops of rain fell until the fire was quenched, and I found myself stumbling half-drowned to my feet from the ground, where the wind and the water had hurled

me. I heard the excited voices of the people calling out of the darkness to each other, and southward was the roar of the departing tempest.

The wall of the church building was only charred, the flame had not burned through it. I was in the city of Waco, Texas, in the summer of 1890, while a church conference was in progress, and straying into the hall where it was in session, I saw upon the platform the homely, earnest preacher of Youngsfort. He was describing, in glowing words, to an intensely interested audience the magnitude and far-reaching character of the religious awakening which began the day following that night of fire and rain.

He held the people spellbound while he pictured the might and majesty and glory of Him who rules alike the hurricane, and holds gentle companionship with souls that seek His service and desire His love.—'Youth's Companion.'

[For the 'Northern Messenger.'

WATCH!

(By Rev. James Cooke Seymour.)

Watch! as a soldier on guard. Every true Christian is a soldier on guard. He does not know the moment an enemy may appear. He must keep a sharp eye on the very signs of danger. Evil puts on many innocent-looking forms. The Christian sentinel must never forget this. Bunyan's 'Parley, the Porter,' made the mistake of listening to the smooth tongue of the enemy, and so 'Soul Castle' was captured and destroyed. We must not make this mistake.

An Emperor of Germany was once passing in disguise through his army. He came upon a wounded sentinel, still holding his post. 'My friend,' he said, 'why don't you go and get your wound dressed?'

'I will die rather than desert my post, sir,' he replied.

'Go,' said the king, 'and I will take your place.'

We must never desert our sentinel-post until Christ Himself relieves us.

Watch! We need to look closely within as well as without. All the perils are not outside. We carry quite a few along with us inside. We need to keep a steady eye on that great internal kingdom which includes our thoughts and feelings, our motives and principles, our affections, prejudices and passions, our judgment and beliefs. You can run from an enemy sometimes, but you cannot run away from yourself. Especially must we watch closely at those royal gates of the soul—the eye and the ear. 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' We must 'keep the door of our lips.' Watch what goes in as well as what goes out. If people let in plenty of whiskey they will be apt to let out plenty of cursing and bitterness. If the tobacco quid is let in a good deal of what the old prophet called 'shameful spewing' will be let out, sometimes even on the church floor or occasionally on the ladies' dresses!

Watch the small beginnings of sin! A great fire does not usually burst out in a moment. It begins with a spark. It was the old lady's lantern upset, they say, that ended in the great Chicago fire a few years ago. Watch the sparks of sin and put them out as quickly as you can. A good deal of Holland, as you know, is below the sea level. They build great dykes to keep out the sea. They watch these dykes day and night. A little boy one day saw some drops of water trickling through one spot. He put his hand on it in a moment and called loudly for help. By-and-by a crowd came, and it was all they could do to stop the gap. If they had not stopped it a good part of Holland would soon have been overflowed with the sea. Do not let sin make a breach in the ramparts of your Christian life ever so small. Watch and stop it before it is well begun.

Watch your opportunities. They come but once, many of them, and never return. David saw a fine opportunity to do a good thing for his country in slaying Goliath. It turned out a good thing for himself, too, as all noble acts do.

Samuel's opportunity was on that night God called him. He watched to some purpose when he answered, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.' That was the making of him for life. Every day brings a

chance to do some good thing that we will never have again.

Youth always comes ten times in everybody's life—yes, ten times—all but nine! You will have ten opportunities to begin serving God in early life—all but nine. Life is like a great river. Its flow is onward. You cannot turn back its flood. Now is your time. Get into the current that will bear you safely and surely to the blissful ocean of eternal joy. A holy life is the only stream that flows that way.

Watch! Keep at it, and all at it, and always at it. 'What I say unto one I say unto all, watch!' You will be within range of the devil's fiery darts clear up to your last breath. You will get done with those darts when heaven's door shuts after you, not before. Watch that your faith is strong enough to quench them all.

Watch the unfolding of God's love to you. He is drawing it out in greater length and richer beauty, and sweeter tenderness and grander breadth and mightier power every day. Watch with joy that glorious development. Watch His guiding eye, His leading hand, His omnipotent protection, His unfailing fidelity. Keep watching until the pearly gates come in sight, and the song of the blessed fall on your ear and the vision of glory is lost in eternal realization.

You have a post, a watch to keep—
Betray it not—he dares not sleep
Who trims the lonely lighthouse lamp,
Or guards the fortress or the camp,
From footsteps of the foe.

Live for the present, work to-day;
Its duties cannot brook delay;
To-morrow will not do; the chime
Rings out the knell of passing time;
We reap but as we sow.
Paisley, Ont.

LI HUNG CHANG ON MISSION WORK.

The most remarkable tribute Christian missions have ever received from a non-Christian source was that paid them by the Viceroy of China, Li Hung Chang, on his visit to this country a few days ago. In his address in New York before the representatives of the different missionary societies at work in China, he said:—

'In the name of my august Master, the Emperor of China, I beg to tender you his best thanks for your approval and appreciation of the protection afforded to the American missionaries in China. What we have done—and how little we have done on our part—is but the duty of our government; while the missionaries, as you have so well expressed, have not sought for pecuniary gains at the hands of our people. They have not been secret emissaries of diplomatic schemes. Their labors have no political significance, and the last, not the least, if I might be permitted to add, they have not interfered with or usurped the rights of the territorial authorities. . . . As a man is composed of soul, intellect and body, I highly appreciate that your eminent Boards, in your arduous and much-esteemed work in the field of China, have neglected none of the three. I need not say much about the first, being an unknowable mystery of which even our great Confucius had no knowledge. As for intellect, you have started numerous educational establishments which have served as the best means to enable our countrymen to acquire a fair knowledge of the modern arts and sciences of the west. As for the material part of our constitution, your societies have started hospitals and dispensaries to save not only the soul but also the body of our countrymen. I have also to add that in the time of famine in some of the provinces you have done your best for the greatest number of sufferers to keep their bodies and souls together.'

'Before I bring my reply to a conclusion I have only two things to mention. The first, the opium-smoking, being a great curse to the Chinese population, your societies have tried their best, not only by anti-opium societies but to afford the best means to stop the craving for the opium, and also you receive none as your converts who are opium-smokers.'

'I have to tender, in my own name, my best thanks for your most effective prayers to God to spare my life when it was imperilled by the assassin's bullet, and for the most kind wishes which you have just now so ably expressed in the interests of my Sovereign, my country and my people.'