

Forgetting the Things that are Behind.

ANNA D. BRADLEY.

To-day I was inclined to be a bit morbid. I was taking a retrospective view of life, and while my present is happy, and, I know, the very best for me; still I saw so plainly that it was not at all that which my early dreams had pictured. And being so tempted to indulge in the blues I said, "Because the retrospective shows a life so different from all my plans, the prospective view also may delude, and so what is the use of it all?"

Being in this indigo state of mind I opened my desk and penned the first syllable of a very densely indigo theme. But I could not write the full word. A power, stronger than my will, held back my hand and forced me to pause ere I sent forth a message to the world which might cause the shadows to grow denser, or press the burdens yet more heavily about some already weary or discouraged heart. "Dare you do so?" a voice seemed to whisper in my spirit ear. "Dare you murmur when a Love omnipotent has ordered all your life, and a hand divine has guided all your way? What if the early dreams have perished? What if the girlish hopes have never reached fruition? What if the coming years should still hold gifts for you other than those for which you now are reaching forth expectant hands? It still should be enough for faith to know God lives and loves and rules, and orders everything for good for those who put their trust in Him. Forget the things that are behind; or remember them only as a warning or a stimulant in the coming duties that lie before you."

"Forget!" moans my other, weaker self, "How can I forget? Memory,—sometimes smiling, sometimes tearful—always walks beside me, and keeps my past before me ever. Oh how can I forget?"

"You must," replies my sterner, better self, "You are an enlisted and a trusted soldier of the cross, and the Captain of your salvation has issued orders that all of his followers shall forget the things that are behind and press forward to the high mark toward which he is leading them."

And then, with humble feelings but renewed consecration, I fell to wondering if it were possible to so press onward in our Master's footsteps that we even could forget the things that lie behind?

Yes, I am sure it is. Else He, whose name is Love, who knoweth our frame and who remembers that we are

but dust, would never have left such command for us. The difficulties that confronted me in my past have all been surmounted, and I can forget them as difficulties and remember them only as safe, sure stepping stones to higher, better grounds.

But the happiness that lit my pathway in the past—tell me, oh ye rebuking spirits who are censuring me so sternly—tell me, would ye have me forget the beautiful sunlight that filled my early days with joy?

Yes, forget e'en the gladness of the past, if, by its contrast to your present, it hinders you in full discharge of duty. It is present, earnest, truthful work which must pave the way for present or for future happiness.

But I have had some small successes in my past which, long ago, did help to fill my heart with hope and courage. Tell me, shall these, too, be forgotten?

Yes, they have fulfilled their mission. Forget them in the greater victories which wait to bless your truest efforts. To remember past achievements might be to enervate, and you must still press on.

There have been failures. Backward I glance across the uneven way o'er which I, stumblingly, have journeyed, and I can see myself often lying low in the dust when, clasping the outstretched hand, I might have stood bravely and triumphantly erect. Alas, my many failures; what shall I do with them?

Forget them. Look not back. The path for you to tread still lies beyond. The weakness, failures, e'en the sins of all your past, they lie behind; and you can hide them every one in the fountain filled with blood.

But there are sorrows. Sweet, sacred, holy sorrows. Oh spirit self, do not ask that these shall be forgotten. Take what you will from me, but let me clasp forever the memory of sacred grief.

Then, oh, so gently the spirit voice responds,—laden with tears I think it is.—"Forget the things that are behind, and still press forward. By nursing sorrows of the past—it matters not how holy they may be—you cannot thus grow stronger for your present duty, present joy or present sorrow. The heart that hugs its grief the closest has ceased its useful life. Dear child of God, forget the things that lie behind." And then the spirit voice was hushed and I seemed all alone.

Forget? Yes, yes it is my Lord's command. Can I, will I struggle to obey? At first I felt all weak and helpless; then lo! a strength that was not mine encompassed me; while a loving hand which could not loose its grasp was held out to me. Solemnly I

placed my own in the outstretched, nail-pierced palm and whispered low, "I will, for I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Mayhap there are in every life, memories to which the soul, in its weakness, all too closely clings, which unfit us for the more responsible duties of to-day. Lives there are which we all can recall, which are helpless because of past happiness; hopeless because of past grief.

We all can call to remembrance some life, earnest, beautiful and useful, until some great sorrow came, and then because they would not forget, their happiness, activity and usefulness died.

Lives there are of which the river Jordan is a fitting type. We see the beautiful river leaping, laughing, dancing in the sunlight; blessing all it touches. Glad life sports beneath its waves; and at its caress verdure springs into being. Commerce plys its busy trade upon its waters; and all around is brighter because the river Jordan flows.

But suddenly it empties itself into the poisoned, stagnant waters of the Dead sea. Then does all of its usefulness die forever, for it can find no power to pass beyond the blighting sea that bears a name so fitting. Hushed and still are its laughing waves, and life and happiness no longer find a resting place upon its bosom.

Ah, if the river only could emerge! But this can never be; and the river like the sea, is dead.

"Forget the things that are behind."

Father, I place my all within Thy keeping. Guide Thou me. Let me cling to no memory however precious or however sacred that will hinder me in the work which thou hast assigned that I should do. Help me to forget the things that are behind, and help me to still press forward wherever Thou shalt lead, and may my progress know no pausing until with joy I kneel before the Great White Throne.

Alexander Campbell.

HIS TALENTS AND HIS TRAINING; HIS TIMES AND HIS TESTIMONY; HIS TRIALS AND HIS TRIUMPHS.

(Continued.)

The New World furnished a sphere in which his talents might have a scope and influence impossible in the Old. And it was very gratifying to him to find, when he joined his father in America, that his father, by another road, had reached conclusions similar to, if not identical with, his own. He had anticipated trouble when he should make known to his father the new

views he had acquired, but his joy was great that his father should, by way of the practical and personal methods of ecclesiastical tyranny, have reached the conclusion that sectarianism was the enemy of Christ, and the greatest obstacle to the triumph of the Gospel on the earth. It is important and interesting to relate that the circumstance which brought Thomas Campbell before his Presbytery as an offender, and finally led to the severance of his connection with the Presbyterian body, was, that going to attend a communion service in a newly settled region where there were people of diverse sects, he invited all the piously disposed to break bread together in memory of the Saviour. When he was censured for this and the religious leaders continued to view him with suspicion he felt that he could not honorably maintain a connection with them. And so when Alexander met his father in America, he found that he had already become an avowed independent, and was industriously advocating the union of all Christians upon the basis of the Bible alone. He had found many of a like mind with himself who were accustomed to attend meetings at which he preached, and who formed a company with whom he discussed long and earnestly the great theme, and from whom he formed an Association devoted to its furtherance.

The watch-word of this Association was, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the scriptures are silent, we are silent." A more extended statement of this principle was:

"That nothing ought to be inculcated upon Christians as articles of faith, nor required of them as terms of communion, but what is expressly taught and enjoined upon them in the Word of God. Nor ought anything to be admitted as of Divine obligation in their church constitution and management, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus and his apostles upon the New Testament Church, either in express terms or by approved precedent."

This great principle presents the grand contribution which the people known as Disciples of Christ have made towards a clear apprehension of the essential character of a true church of Christ, and has furnished them with a means of testing any and every organization claiming to be a church of Christ. An organization claiming to be a church of Christ which violates this rule is not a church of Christ, but a mere human society. And in the violation of this rule we find the essential element of Popery, whether it be Roman Catholic Popery or Protestant Popery. The person or the