

## THE RUDDER OF LIFE.

M. B. RYAN.

I came down the "Quoddy" River the other day on one of the large fishing boats which at this time of year throng the waters of the lower Bay of Fundy, carrying fish to the factories of the neighboring American towns. The boat was strongly built and well rigged, one of the best of that class of boats built hereabouts, which seagoing men say cannot be surpassed for strength and safety by any boats in the world. The wind was fair for the first part of the course, and as the huge mainsail and the trim jib caught the breeze our craft started through the water as if the home trip was a thing of pleasure. I sat watching the flying foam curling about her prow as with almost imperceptible motion she glided toward her haven. Suddenly she veered for a moment from her course as though some unseen hand had seized her and was about to cast her upon the rocky shore of the little island but a rod or so to our right. It was the strong set of tide which sweeps in and out among the islands which dot the bosom of this river, with a capriciousness and power which would put any but experienced boatmen in peril. But our craft righted herself after an instant and held steadily on her course. Time after time this experience was repeated. The currents seemed to conspire to put the boat in jeopardy. But, as though instinct with the determination to save herself and her burden, and to gain her moorings in safety, she met them all resolutely and pushed on her way. Nor were the vicious currents all she had to contend against. For the wind, which was fair at starting, veered about and would have driven her far out of her course and away from her destination. But the good boat persisted in her way against the wind as well as against the tide. To be sure she did not make such good headway now. Nor did she glide so smoothly through the water. She rolled and tossed, and the spray came flying over her deck as she fought her way along. But she kept her prow to the storm and every moment shortened the distance homeward. Finally we reached the snug harbor, where with sails furled and anchor cast, she rode in perfect safety from either tide or wind. Her success in making the voyage led me to think of the means of it. It was not her sturdy hull, for that would have been speedily laid upon the jagged rocks where the surging currents would pound it to pieces shortly. It was not her stout sails, for these would have given the contrary winds all the more power over her. It was her little rudder, hidden out of sight for the most part under her stern, which really saved her and enabled her to reach home successfully. It was that which turned her prow so bravely into the current and brought her back to her course in spite of the tide, when she had wavered for an instant. It was that which righted her up when the contrary wind struck her, and which held her hard up to the wind so that she could pursue her way. The rudder gave her the victory. Without it she would have been helpless and would have been wrecked

on the rocky shore of the neighboring islands, or perhaps engulfed in the whirlpools not far off. But with it, the power which otherwise would have destroyed her was made to propel her onward, and the haven was reached in spite of every obstacle.

Is it not thus in life? "We are on an ocean sailing." Sometimes we have fair winds and smooth seas. Then all goes well. But it is not all fair sailing. There are cross-tides and contrary winds. And these sometimes beset us furiously. We need a rudder to keep our ship on its course. PURPOSE is the rudder of life. A purposeless life is like a rudderless ship. When the wind is fair it sails splendidly. When wind and tide beset, it fails miserably. The word "purpose" comes from two words which mean "to place before." It is "that which one sets before himself to be reached or accomplished." A man with a purpose is going somewhere and he knows where. He is aiming at something and he knows what. His course before him is mapped out. He steers his ship along that course. His purpose gives definiteness to his life. When the tides of passion catch him and threaten to drive him out of his course his purpose enables him to set his face steadfastly against them and hold on his way. When the winds of opposition strike him and make him shudder and sheer for a moment, his purpose rights him up and holds him steady while he battles his way onward. It is indispensable in the *conflicts* of life. If life had no trials we could perhaps live it successfully without a purpose. But every life has its trials. So every life needs a steadfast purpose.

The value and power of purpose is illustrated in the life of Christ. He had an object before him when he came to earth. It is variously stated. It was "to seek and to save the lost," "to do the will of the Father," "to destroy the works of the devil." In a word it was to secure man's salvation. Whatever was necessary to that entered into his work. This purpose gave Christ victory. It sustained him under the greatest difficulties. The devil could not seduce him. His disciples could not discourage him. His enemies could not affright him. Persecution was no hindrance. Death was no barrier. Calmly, resistlessly, he kept on his way. His life was crowded with toil. His soul was burdened with sorrow. His way was hedged with thorns and haunted by vipers. No matter. "For the joy that was set before him" he endured the cross, despised the shame, and gained his purpose. The majestic victory of Christ was due to the enthronement of a sublime purpose in his heart.

Christ's followers should be men and women of purpose. How many Christians, if questioned as to their purpose in the Christian life, could not define it. They became Christians professedly because others were taking the step; perhaps because friends urged them to do so. They continue to profess Christianity because it is fashionable or profitable. There was no definite aim in starting; no object set before the mind for attainment; no *pre-determination* taken, along the line of which the life is being developed. Is it any wonder that there are so many unsuccessful Christians? The purposeless Christian must of necessity fail.

Christian brother—cultivate a purpose in your Christian life. Resolve that you will win the crown of joy offered to the righteous. Make that your *pre-determination*. Keep that object ever before you. Then work along the line of that purpose. That will help you amazingly in the Christian life. It will give zest to every duty and pertinence to every struggle. You will not then feel that

the Fight of Faith is a useless one. You will not faint under the burden of your cross. You will not find the task of self-development in the Christian life a tasteless one. Your purpose will rend the veil and the light from beyond will stream athwart your pathway, making every step onward a victory, and every achievement a joy. The good Barnabas, when he had seen the grace of God in the conversion of men to Christ in heathen Antioch was glad. And, as though he would express the whole of the conditions of success in the Christian life in one sentence, he exhorted them that with *purpose of heart* they would cleave unto the Lord. Purpose is the rudder which will steer the ship in safety.

## THE BEST WAY OF OVERCOMING.

A. E. COATES.

To one who has not entered upon the Christian warfare this would be an unfinished sentence. He would naturally ask this question: Overcoming what? To us who have taken up the cross of Christ there is but one meaning in these words. They are complete of themselves, and a follower of the Lord does not need to ask the question: What am I to overcome? He knows that when he enlists under the banner of the Lord there is but one enemy with whom he has to deal, and that is Satan.

He may appear in different guises, and employ different means for our destruction, but they all originate in him; he is our common enemy. The Christian and the evil one can never agree. One or the other must in time be conquered.

Since the present life of a Christian is to be one of continual fighting, it is necessary for him, when entering the conflict, to equip himself with the best weapons possible.

Where are we to get these weapons? and how may we know what will be most serviceable to us in this conflict?

A person in embarking in any great enterprise would naturally and wisely seek the advice of those who had experience along that line. They would be able to give him many wise suggestions, and point out to him many of the dangers that lie along the way, and of which they had learned by experience.

So with the Christian; he should look for help and advice to One who has been through the conflict, and who would therefore be quite capable of giving wise instruction. Who is better able to give this information than the Lord himself? He came to earth, went through its trials and troubles, engaged in conflict with the evil one, and is well acquainted with all the schemes and devices which Satan can invent to entrap us. We cannot speak to him personally, but he has left, for our guidance and instruction, his word. From it we are to obtain the weapons used in the Christian warfare. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, tells them to put on the whole armour of God that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Let us look for a few moments into the lives of some of the great and good men mentioned in the Old Testament and see by what means they overcame.

Gideon, with only three hundred men, put to flight the host of the Midianites. Now he and his men could not of themselves have