

Pastor and People.

HE LEADS US ON.

He leads us on
By paths we did not know,
Upward He leads us, though our steps be slow,
Though oft we faint and falter by the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day,
Yet when the clouds are gone
We know He leads us on.

He leads us on
Through all the unquiet years,
Past all our dreamland hopes and doubts and fears
He guides our steps. Through all the tangled maze
Of sin, of sorrow and o'erclouded days,
We know His will is done:
And still He leads us on.

And He, at last,
After the weary strife,
After the restless fever we call life,
After the dreariness, the aching pain,
The many struggles which have proved in vain—
After our toils are past—
Will give us rest at last.

UNFINISHED WORK.

BY C. H. WETHERBE.

When a strong Christian worker is cut down in the midst of his splendid usefulness, leaving his work unfinished, there are many who greatly bemoan the event and feel that the work has met an irrecoverable setback. Everything looks dark and appalling, and dire predictions are made concerning the further outcome of the special work in which the deceased had been so efficiently engaged. Particularly is this true in cases where the workers are few and no other trained leader is in sight. But that unfinished work, if it be essential to God's honour, will be carried on in due time by some other human hands, perhaps not presently discovered by men. Dr. Maclaren says: "Joseph might have said, when he lay dying, 'Well! perhaps I made a mistake, after all. I should not have brought this people down here, even if I have been led hither. I do not see that I have helped them one step towards the possession of the land. Do you remember the old proverb about certain people who should not see half-finished work? All our work in this world has to be only what the physiologists call functional. God has a great scheme running on through ages. Joseph gives it a helping hand for a bit, and then somebody else takes up the running and carries the purpose forward a little further.' Yes, our work may seem unfinished, when we die, but other hands, made ready, will take it up."

GIVING WAY WHERE WE ARE STRONGEST.

BY REV. JOSEPH HAMILTON.

We have often heard it said that the strength of a chain is just the strength of its weakest link. With certain limitations the same thing is true of character. We are liable to break down at our weakest point. Where there is known to be some weak point in a fortress, that weak point is likely to be assailed, the citadel taken, and the garrison put to rout.

But this is only one view of the case; it is only one side of the whole truth; and it is the other side of the truth that I wish to bring into view here. The fortress we have supposed may have a weak point; but if the commander of the fortress is aware of that, he may post so many of his troops at that weak point that it really becomes the strongest point in the whole garrison. If that point is assaulted, the assault is likely to be rebuked. On the other hand, there may be some position in that fortress so very strong that it is left unguarded. The commander feels that there is little danger of any successful attack being made there, so he draws off his men and plants them at points that are weaker or more exposed. Such a course seems reasonable; but it may be a fatal mistake. The general of the attacking army may calculate that the strong

position will not be well defended; he attacks it; it gives away; the breach is made; the conquering army enters and takes possession. The fortress has broken down where it was strongest.

Just so it is often in Christian character. It is not the weak point always that is assailed, and gives away. It is often where a man is strongest that he yields, and goes down. If I know where I am weakest, I may defend that point so resolutely that I become stronger there than anywhere. I may, perhaps, have yielded there before; now I am on my guard; by the help of God I am safe at that point. But the coming enemy may attack me where I have been strong heretofore. I am not prepared for that; the position is not guarded; just there I am defeated; the character has broken down at its strongest point. It would be easy to cite many notable examples on the same principle. Abraham, Moses, Solomon, James, John, Peter—broke down where they were strongest. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." The citadel of the soul needs to be guarded all round.

Mimico.

SCRIPTURE TEXTS ILLUSTRATED.

REV. J. A. M'KERN, B.A.

"A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees."—Ps. lxxiv. 5.

I once took much interest in watching the growth of a young banyan tree. The peculiarity of its habit is well known. Its drooping branches fall to the ground and root themselves there, forming accessory trunks, which widen and strengthen the mighty grasp of the tree. The liquor traffic is like a banyan tree. From its pillared props the centuries look down. Its wide spreading branches have drooped and rooted themselves in all lands. We have watched the growth of this tree in our own country. Its dark shadow has spread wider, its fatal roots have struck deeper, its multitudinous trunks have grown thicker. Our country's strength is being sapped by the unconscionable demands of this tree, and yet our Governments, Provincial and Federal, do dig about it and dung it. We read of a time when men who built for God were famous according as they lifted up axes upon the thick trees. We have here a thick tree, and work for many axes, and fame for those who will wield them aright. But this banyan tree will not be destroyed by the cutting down of its growth in a township, or in a county, or even in a province; the work must be done for the whole Dominion, for as long as a branch remains new roots will be formed.

When white men first touched our tree-clad coasts, and sailed up the rivers darkened with overhanging branches, and along the shores of the lakes that were lakes of the wood, they must have been overwhelmed at the thought of such a stupendous task as the felling of these forests primeval. Yet that work has been done, and it has been done by each settler cutting down the trees round about his own home, and when each had done his work, clearing touched clearing. Now we are witnesses of a second growth, a giant evil has taken root in our country and spread its hurtful shadow everywhere. Another clearing must be made, and again the appeal is to the settler, to every one who would make his home here. Every man who has a vote has an axe. When we can get that axe in the hands of men with Christian conscience, and sense of responsibility, then the doom of our country's baneful banyan tree is sealed.

Orono.

Oh for a feeling of security in danger, the result not of a calculation of "probabilities," nor of a blind confidence in the "stability of things," but of a child's loving trust in its Father!

A DIVINE MESSAGE.

One Sabbath evening this spring a very much perplexed and discouraged woman went her way to church. She had been in two minds about going, for the evening was warm and the couch in her chamber looked very inviting, while the unusual quiet of the house and the peace of the hour offered a welcome balm to her wearied nerves. Besides this, she had already attended church once that day, and it was an open question whether, in view of a full and anxious week, to begin as soon as Monday should swing wide its portals, it was not her duty rather to stay at home than to go out, even to the sanctuary. However, her conclusion at last was that the vesper service could not be neglected and that her vacant place, should she yield to the solicitations of ease, or even of needed rest, would haunt her through the coming seven days, so, as I said, she went to church.

As always, there was a portion waiting for the hungry child at the Father's table, and it was kneaded of the finest of the wheat. The opening prayers and the responsive reading seemed meant for her, as indeed they were, so simple, so direct, so personal and so uplifting were the tenor of Scripture selections and of earnest petition. And then came the divine message, on the wings of a tender hymn, sung by a girl's silvery voice:

In heavenly love abiding,
No change my heart shall fear;
And safe is such confiding,
For nothing changes here.
The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me,
How can I be dismayed?

You have seen a flower, parched and spent for the need of rain, drooping and fading and shorn of its beauty, and then before your eyes the shower has fallen, drenching its roots, filling its cup, washing its petals, and it has taken in, and put on, new life—"The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Even while the sweet notes vibrated through the upper room where God's people were assembled, the Master with them, as surely as with the few who loved him and to whom he appeared of old in Galilee, a great tranquillity, a heavenly peace and refreshment came to the soul of the disheartened worshiper. A gladness of spirit, a resolution to overcome, a new strength were bestowed on her as the bird-like voice sang on. Then other voices, young and strong, tenor, contralto, bass, joined in the harmony, and the organ chords swelled in a grand accompaniment:

Wherever He may guide me,
No want shall turn me back;
My Shepherd is beside me,
And nothing can I lack;
His wisdom ever waketh;
His sight is never dim;
He knows the way he taketh,
And I will walk with Him.

The divine message intended for her reached her in the Lord's house and she was enabled to go forward with renewed energy. But not alone to the hymn, sung by the trained quartet as part of their work for the day, was this message confined. Part of it was in the pastor's prayer that forgot no one, that included every home and heart in the congregation; part of it was in the rarely eloquent sermon, emphasizing practical duty and calling for fidelity in "that which is least." Part of it, and no small part, came through the thought of the pastor himself, speaking as earnestly and with as thorough and conscientious preparation to the smaller evening as to the larger morning audience. Part of it, no doubt, was due to that sort of "Christian endeavor" which, applied to the individual case, had brought this particular woman to her own pew that summer night.

There is a tendency to ignore or omit or set small store by the evening service on the Lord's day. So long as we have a second service would it not be to our profit, perhaps to our great comfort and joy, to attend it faithfully? Only individual fidelity can remove the reproach that attaches to a thin evening congregation. Crowds are composed of units.—Margaret E. Sangster, in the *Congregationalist*.

A STREET-CORNER QUESTION.

Thursday evening, on my way to the prayer meeting, a boy afflicted with St. Vitus' dance stopped me and asked this strange question:

"Do they let folks in down there?"

He sat by my side that evening, and I thought of his question more than once.

We often wonder why people do not come to church and to the prayer-meeting more than they do. May it not be true that they often wonder whether we want them or not?

Have they any reason for thinking that they are not wanted? I have sometimes called on people who have treated me with the utmost politeness and yet something in their manner would give the lie to their words when they said, "Do stay a little longer."

I could not help thinking that had they spoken honestly they would have said, "I am really glad you are going."

We are not willing to admit that we give people reason to think that they are not wanted in the prayer-meeting. But they want some positive evidence that they are wanted. They want this evidence before they go, and they want it again after they get into the meeting.

When my friend invites me to spend the evening with him I conclude that he is going to put himself to some trouble for my entertainment. But suppose that when the friends you have invited to prayer meeting get there they find themselves not in an atmosphere that is warm and cheerful, but in one that suggests ice; do you think they feel that they are really wanted there?

I have a friend whose wife says of him when company comes he never can receive them without embarrassment. He is shy, and the presence of callers, however much he may like them, does not serve to make him feel at ease.

"There is one thing, however," she adds, "that he always does if the weather offers the least excuse for it. He rushes out to the wood-house, brings in some wood, and piles it on the grate; and he really can build a splendid fire. That takes with everybody. He feels more at ease after he has done that because, though he does not shine in conversation, yet he has done something for our guests, and they do enjoy the fire ever so much."

Now, when a stranger or two drop unexpectedly into a prayer-meeting their entrance should not be like the opening of a door that lets in cold air.

On the other hand, the flame of devotion should burn all the more brightly, being kindled on the altar of a genuine love for their souls. In such an atmosphere would they not soon feel at home? And then how easy it would be for us whose hearts have been warmed to give them a right hand of welcome with a heart behind it! I am sure that under such conditions our "Come again" would not seem a mere formality, and they would be very likely to come again.—Egbert L. Bangs.

THE ART OF HEARING.

If the preacher moulds the hearers, it is not less true that the hearers make or mar the preacher. The sight of a thin and unsympathetic congregation, as the minister enters the pulpit, will sometimes chill the message on his lips, even though he has come there with his heart on fire; and, on the contrary, the play of emotion on a single attentive face sometimes imparts warmth to the delivery of an entire discourse. The sense of two or three superior listeners, or even a single one, will often be with the minister in his study during the entire week, spurring him to diligence, and forbidding him to fall below their expectations. Unaware, the preacher sways to the level of his average audience. If there are many hearing him who are abreast of the best knowledge of the day, he must address himself frequently to the solution of the problems with which the age is struggling; but if his hearers are unintelligent except in regard to the interests of their own occupations, he will unconsciously narrow the sweep of his ideas within the circumference of their comprehension.—Dr. Stalker, in *Congregationalist*.